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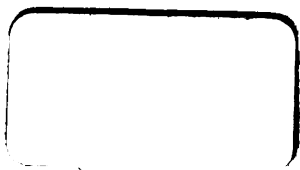


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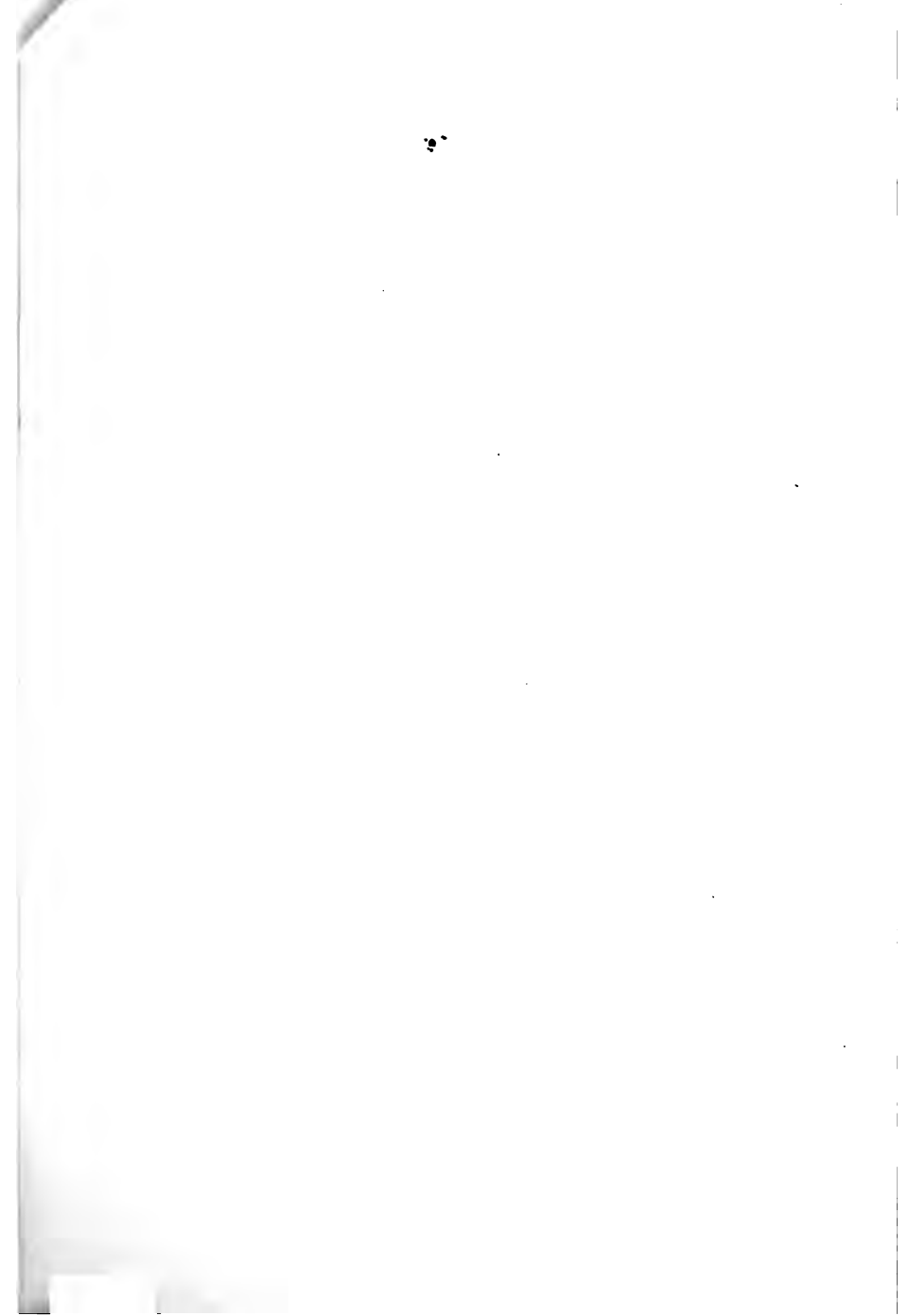
CLARA E. LAUGHLIN





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THE KEYS OF HEAVEN

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CLARA E. LAUGHLIN

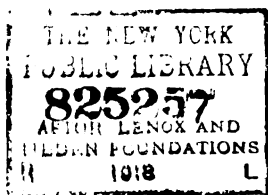
AUTHOR OF "FELICITY," "THE EVOLUTION OF A
GIRL'S IDEAL," "EVERYBODY'S LONESOME,"
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PART ONE

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"He loved this girl and, because he loved, freed his immortal part, and towered higher than any of the sons of men. . . . She gave him strength to soar, taught him the mystery of Beauty and Desire, 'imparadised his mind.' . . . She had given him the keys of heaven."

"Dante and the Traveller," from *The Road in Tuscany*

—MAURICE HEWLETT

PART ONE

CHAPTER I

IN that morning hour between five and six, Stephen took stock of more than conditions at the mine; his survey always extended over pretty much everything in the camp; and nearly always there was time enough, before the men of the day shift rolled out and shook themselves, to let his gaze lengthen toward the encompassing mountains and to reflect on other than immediate things. Thus it usually happened that in the freshness of each new day, Stephen Bellas found himself taking some account, also, of his ideals and purposes—planning some things, dreaming of others, reviewing a few, looking forward to many.

After six o'clock, when a new day began shaping itself to the pattern of all other days in the little community he governed, each hour of his time seemed impounded for the maintenance of that simple but almost invariable routine; pressed upon by human contacts and the problems they brought. But, up on the top of the dump when the morning was virginal and tender, Stephen frequently stretched his imagination and his aspiration, and made them both better for the exercise.

His relations to that little colony of five hundred souls in the cabins beside the dump, were manifold; he was the lord of life, if not of death, over them in many ways. He provided them with work, and with some of their play; he brought in, over miles of desert, all that they ate and all that they wore; he engineered their water supply and built their houses; he made and administered the only laws which really concerned them; his common-sense knowledge of

medicine and surgery was called upon in cases ranging from a difficult birth to the battle against death in all the forms the desert knows. It was a patriarchal burden, for a man not yet quite thirty—a man who, not ten years ago, had strolled across the Mexican border with his hands in his practically penniless pockets, to prospect in the country of the Yaquis. Stephen might well have indulged in a little complacency, when he climbed the dump of Montezuma mine to overlook his kingdom; but he was not one of those men to whom complacency comes. Nearly everything he saw near at hand suggested some immediate improvement. When his gaze roved toward the horizon, he saw a multiplication of mining camps among those hills to whose hidden treasures he held many claims; and hard, white roads between them, each with its narrow single track at one side, for ore-cars running to a central smelter. Other things he saw, also: schoolhouses, and a white 'dobe church; and—away off, at the edge of a millennial Mexico—houses with windows and chimneys, with cook-stoves and chairs and beds!

That hour when he planned a world of his own creating, was all too brief. Long before he was wishful for it, the day was upon him: the hard-packed dirt in front of the huts was suddenly swarming with youngsters tumbling out of sleep like fat puppies; girls and women were stretching themselves on their way to the water spigot which did duty instead of the village fountain, as their five-gallon cans which had once contained gasoline did duty for the water jar of their foremothers immemorial; the pungent, acrid smell of smoke from many fires invaded the freshness of the morning air, and soon was joined by the effluvia of cheap, sweetish, black-burnt coffee and the appetising but unæsthetic odour of frying bacon from the bunkhouse kitchen.

Almost invariably Stephen could hear Arrick, the day foreman, tussling with Thad Stilwell, who never could inure himself to the tragedy of having to get up. A chorus

of Mexican canines yapping for their share of the breakfast tortillas would evoke return noises from the corral. Maternal voices that seemed to threaten an extinction of innocents rivalling Herod's, were not infrequently joined by the staccato yells of protesting progeny. By all these familiar sights and sounds and smells, Stephen was reminded that another day was begun.

Sometimes, before Stephen left the mouth of the mine, Lufkin, his Cornish superintendent, would join him there for a brief consultation or explanation before the day shift went on.

Lufkin had mined gold on the African West Coast, where he found the climate intolerable; he had mined copper in Chile, where his gorge rose at the treatment of the natives and he had quit because he wouldn't be a slave-driver; he had mined at Cobalt, too, and probably in other places, before he drifted into Mexico. If Lufkin had one passion reaching beyond his body, one ardour that served him for religion, patriotism, love, it was for his citizenship in that Empire on which the sun never sets; in his mind, the glory reflected on him by that world-wide sway was very great. Just why, instead of helping to extend or to maintain that Empire, he was developing the resources of northern Mexico, Lufkin never explained; and no one ever asked him. But he had the air of a Briton engaged not merely in earning a living on alien soil, but of being, in some mysterious way, part of the Empire's far-flung conquest line.

About thirty-five was Lufkin; a stocky, sturdy chap, not over five feet six or seven inches tall, and ashen blonde as to hair, eyebrows, eyelashes and moustache, although the last named was burnt-umber, in spots, from tobacco stain.

As he came climbing up the dump one August morning just after six o'clock, Stephen, watching him amusedly, knew that Lufkin's errand was not so business-like as he was trying by his air to indicate.

"Mornin', Gov'nor!" he saluted, briskly.

"Morning, Dan," the "Governor" returned.

"Thought I better show you before it gets to workin'," Lufkin began, in his most responsible manner. "There's a knock in one o' the bearings of the big main hoist. We may have to send up to the States fer a machinist from the comp'ny that made it."

Stephen examined the bearing.

"Oh, no," he said; "that's easy." And he gave directions for its repairing.

"You're a good machinist, Gov'nor," Lufkin commented approvingly.

"I worked in good machine shops," Stephen answered.

"Great thing for a man to have an all-round training like you got," Lufkin went on.

Stephen repressed a smile; Lufkin was not often so commendatory.

"What is it, Dan?" he asked. "Come on—spit it out. You didn't climb up here before breakfast to pat me on the back—nor to show me that bearing. Come along!"

Lufkin was gazing far away, down the valley and off toward the hills in their late summer splendour of purple and gold, where the native equivalents for heather and gorse carpeted the thinly covered rocks which nourished little else but mesquite.

"Not bad, that!" Lufkin murmured, nodding vaguely toward the distant view. "Nothin' like the Downs at home, of course—but not bad. Never would have thought I'd grow to like the bloomin' place; but I do!"

Stephen knew Dan Lufkin for a sentimentalist, inclined to "slop over" at times, as the boys expressed it. But this was the first experience he had had with Dan "spilling it" in the morning. It was usually the flooding southern moonlight and the music of Mexican voices attuned to guitars as they sang the plaintively sensuous native melodies, that "got" Lufkin. To Stephen, this outburst at six in the morning could mean but one thing.

"Well!" he said, gently, laying his hand almost pater-

nally on Lufkin's shoulder, "I hope you'll find yourself loving this valley better every day you live. Who is she? Esperanza?"

Lufkin nodded.

There was a moment of constraint while Stephen sought desperately for something to say which should not be lacking in heartiness; but before he had found it, Dan broke the tension by calling out some commonplace direction to Henri Duret, engineer of the Montezuma, who suddenly appeared near the exhaust pipe.

"Enry" they called him, in the bunk house.

"Wait a bit, Enry," Lufkin cried. "I want a word with you about the hoist. Thanks for the good wishes, Gov'nor."

And he was gone.

Stephen felt uncomfortable. He had not risen to the occasion, he knew; and he was disgusted with himself. He was afraid he had hurt Lufkin, and he wanted to go straight to him and make it right. But the more he thought on things to say, the worse—it seemed to him—any of those efforts would make matters. Lufkin knew how he felt about marriages like this—"squaw-man arrangements" Stephen had more than once characterised them—and Stephen couldn't hope to lie about this one so gracefully that Dan wouldn't recognise the lie, and the motive, and be worse hurt than by silence.

From where he stood, Stephen could look down upon Esperanza's home and see the shapeless creature who was Esperanza's mother, about her business of getting coffee and tortillas for the family breakfast. Father, mother and nine children, they slept on the hard dirt floor of that 'dobe hut; there was little in their mode of living to mark any advance over that of the Yaquis among whom Stephen had lived for two years. Stephen had heard Lufkin talk of the Cornwall cottage that had been his boyhood home; of the wealth of sweet, old-fashioned flowers in the little garden with its hedge of clipped yew; of the cosy kitchen,

filled with substantial furnishings which had made comfort and warm memories for generations of Lufkin folk; of the teas his mother would set forth: the clotted cream, the strawberry jam, the delicious bread and sweet butter, the big Staffordshire teapot pouring out a fragrant brew that a man could never lose the tantalisin' mem'ry of, not if he was in this here place they call Araby the blest.

Stephen shuddered—and went in to breakfast.

In the mess-room he found himself appraising the familiar surroundings according to a new standard of value. There wasn't much here that was as a man would dream of having it in his home. No getting around that! But how much better would Esperanza Pina be able to do for Dan Lufkin, haunted by memories of sweet clotted cream and the amber brew from that Staffordshire teapot? If Stephen had lived in a different sort of community, he might have been better able to persuade himself that these things were none of his durned business. But in the close relationships of this desert-encompassed camp, he was not able to argue himself out of a depression which Dan's announcement had made.

When Dan and Enry came in, Stephen could see that Lufkin had not yet risked another hurt.

They were six, about the trestle table covered with white oilcloth and set with white enamelled iron-ware in lieu of crockery. Besides Stephen and Lufkin and Duret, there were Thad Stillwell, the surveyor and assayer; and Reilly, the night foreman, and Arrick, the day foreman. Six lone men on the edge of the world—and a seventh waiting on them with shuffling feet: Charley the Chink, most solitary of them all; as he padded in, his long queue hanging, and set before Stephen a big dish of bacon and fried eggs, Stephen wondered what dreams of a home like those of his worshipped ancestors, flitted far back behind that sphinx-like countenance of the Celestial; and if he was ever tempted to compromise with that dream by marrying a Mexican.

In the cabin nearest to the bunkhouse, one other exile lived: Hugh Blaikie, secretary of the Montezuma mine. Blaikie was married; but none of the lone men envied him.

The floor of the mess room was dirt, trodden hard. The seats were long boards nailed to uprights. The lights (when lights were needed) were tallow candles set in emptied bottles. But the place was not without a rude cosiness that had in it something warming to the spirit as the rough comforts were grateful to the flesh. The fine hides and antlers on the 'dobe walls were reminders of hunts that it did a man good to recall. The fireplace had memories, too; many an evening of fellowship had been passed beside it, and not infrequently a guest thereat was of a sort to make memorable the occasion of his tarrying. One could not call life in the bunkhouse "homelike"; yet for men wrestling with the wilderness for its treasure, these were not poor comforts that Lufkin was about to "swap" for what Esperanza could give him.

Stephen was noticeably pensive all day.

In the evening, at supper, Dan told the boys. His tone, his manner, were more apologetic than a successful suitor's should be. There was bravado in his words; but it did not "carry."

"This is a nice little happy family of ours," he began, awkwardly. "But I'm leavin' it. The prettiest, sweetest girl in the state of Sonora has said the word. And you fellows are all invited to eat Christmas dinner in a reg'lar home—Esperanza's and mine."

"Hear! hear!" cried Thad Stillwell, hoping to make the noisiness of his response cover its lack of heartiness. Thad was a "black sheep"; but though he had moods—alcoholic moods—when he could consort with pretty rough types of womanhood, his notion of what he might marry was as high and mighty as if there were no reasons why he shouldn't aspire to the very best.

"Well, I'm sure I wish ye luck!" Reilly said, when the

awkward pause came. And he hoped that he slapped Lufkin on the back with such vigour that it would have been hard to doubt the sincerity of his good wishes. They were sincere; but his hopes of their potency were very small.

Enry saved the situation—Enry with his Gallic courtesy which only the unknowing mistake for “mere politeness” because it is so unfailing. It did not occur to Enry that the important thing was what *he* thought of Dan Lufkin’s choice; to his mind, the important thing was that a man was telling his happiness to his friends who, naturally, rejoiced with him—not because they liked the lady, but because he liked her!

Enry sprang to his feet and proposed a toast to the health of the bride, and to her fecundity. He was very simple and earnest about this, and unaware that both Reilly and Thad Stilwell blushed.

Then Stephen felt that it was “up to him” to make a speech; which he got through most satisfactorily by sticking to glittering generalities of the sort that a “home, and all it means, is the one thing in the world most men find worth working for,” etc.

Altogether, it passed off very well, and Dan was in high spirits when he went to join his lady-love and receive the congratulations of her friends.

Stephen got up when Dan did, and went for his usual stroll through the camp. His going broke up the group at the table, as he had hoped it would. He had a delicate feeling that the least they could do for Dan was to refrain from any suggestion of sitting in a jury on him when he left the mess-room. He was afraid Dan knew that none of them really approved. Stephen’s experience with men in love was meagre. If he could have known how fully Dan’s susceptibility was engaged, so that there was almost none of it left wherewith to care what others thought, he might have spared himself many qualms.

But since he did not know, he was very thoughtful as he strolled around the camp, picking his steps carefully so

as not to injure any of the crawling, sprawling youngsters of whom every family seemed to have at least two. At that age they did not appeal to Stephen; yet he knew them all by name. In all the ages upwards of theirs, the supply was no less abundant; the Mexican women seemed to bear every year for a surprisingly long period; they lost a good many, but they had a bewildering plenty left. Stephen took this condition of family life for granted among the natives; but he wondered if, in ten years, Dan's home would swarm with eight or nine little crossbreeds; and what sort of children they would be, with that ashen-blond Cornishman for father and a mother just such as these other women of the camp had once been.

Every one was talking of the betrothal. When Stephen came, in his rounds, to the cabin of the Pinas, he found it a lively centre of interest.

José Pina was a contractor, who brought in hay and wood for the camp. He was a rather gaunt creature, and fully as dirty as the law allowed.

To-night, while his neighbours congratulated him on his daughter's betrothal to the boss, he was barefoot, and his once-light shirt and trousers were dark with ancient soil patches. His wife, Maria, was shaped like an enormous head-cheese or liver pudding. She had borne him thirteen children of whom nine were still living.

Esperanza was very pretty. Her lithe young body was full of feline grace. Her skin was as smooth and soft as satin, and of an indescribably warm, rich tone. The velvety blackness of her eyes, the milky whiteness of her teeth, the abundance of her dark hair, all were charming. She was modest and good. She had been to Hermosilla to a girls' school and could read and write—but was little interested in doing either. She danced in a way that easily set many men a-tingle with sensuous pleasure at the sight; and she sang to the accompaniment of her own guitar, with plaintive, haunting sweetness. Nature's perfectly planned creature she was, lacking nothing that might

make her attractive, responsive, fecund and brooding. And no concern of nature's was it whether Esperanza in fulfilling these functions was happy or otherwise, nor how she met the home-making ideals of her mate.

When Stephen had said and done all that he thought was expected of him in the matter of felicitations, he went on his way.

CHAPTER II

THE quarters of all those concerned in the management of the mine, were grouped at a distance of about a hundred yards from the foot of the dump; the intervening space served as a sun-baked "plaza" with one scrubby mesquite in its centre, though there was a fringe of shade—mesquite and *pola verde*—close to the executive buildings. A rude gallery or porch, with a sloping roof and no floor, was built across the front of the quarters; in the shelter of this, the community gathered to buy and to gossip before the long counter which was the front of the company's store. Entrance to the store was not for customers; they stood outside and made their wants known and received their purchases. Adjoining the store on the left was the office, with the kitchen behind; the corresponding rooms on the right were Stephen's sitting-room and bedroom. The mess-room was back of the store. These three back rooms opened, in the shade of another porch, onto a space shaded by cottonwoods which Stephen had planted, and beyond which were the bunkhouse and the cabin of Charley the Chink. The corral was close by. Then, at a distance of several hundred feet, the dwellings of the Mexicans began—usually five rooms side by side, each room the home of a numerous family. These 'dobe huts, set here in the wilderness, with no sign of other human habitation as far as the eye could see; that dump, topped with a few low shacks and high standpipes—these were the visible evidences of Stephen's kingdom. But to Stephen, who knew what was hid in the hearts of the hills, his kingdom that he had dreamed of for years, and toiled for, and sacrificed everything to establish, was not yet transcribed from vision into view.

Stephen had some rather vivid recollections of his childhood home before he was five. It was a motherless home, in one of the north shore suburbs of Chicago, and he was the only child. He remembered a big gray house, with a cupolaed tower, and a big barn, and a big yard. He remembered servants who were indulgent or neglectful of him as their mood was. He remembered a succession of housekeepers—dependent relatives and independent hirelings—who seemed to fret his father and none of whom Stephen liked. Then, a miracle happened; it was like a beautiful fairy story. The very loveliest person that Stephen had even been able to imagine, came to live with them; her name was Alice, and people called her Stephen's stepmother. Stephen could not understand what it was that Alice brought into his home, his life; he only knew that he loved her exceedingly; and that from being a very lonely little boy, he became one of the happiest small persons in the entire world—for a whole year. He was only six when the tragedy happened. His father was away from home, on a brief business trip. There was an overheated furnace, one bitter cold night, and a frame house in roaring, crackling flames. No one ever knew just how it had happened, but Alice—. And many a time in the years that followed, Stephen wished that it had been his lot to perish with her.

His father, wild at first, grew morose. He drank heavily, his business was neglected, debts swamped them. Remonstrated with, urged to control himself for Stephen's sake if not for his own, he disappeared, taking Stephen with him.

The boy's life until he was twelve was a long nightmare. Dragged from place to obscurer place, his condition never got so bad but that somehow the next turn of the wheel made it worse. When his father died, Stephen wrote to the only relative whose name he could remember: a sister of his father's, married to a wealthy man. Her reply seemed to the boy to confirm all that his father had told

him about relatives and how they love to help you when you're down and out. So the youngster, swallowing the bitter surge that rose in him, set himself to the task of life, unaided.

There followed years when he worked in a machine shop in a small Illinois town, from six to nine every morning, and from three to six every afternoon, and all day Saturdays; going to High School and paying his way. Summers, he worked on farms, and once he peddled kitchenware. Then college—a small, earnest “freshwater” college, where he tended furnaces, chopped wood, and got besides the general course, mining engineering, and Spanish.

All those years, Stephen knew what he intended to do. Full many a night when he should have been asleep, he was lying on his stomach in his bed in some low-eaved attic chamber, a book on his pillow and beside it a small glass lamp—reading the “Conquest of Mexico,” “The Fair God,” and other tales of the Aladdin caves that lay over the Rio Grande.

He meant to go there, some day. He meant to locate some of those old, lost Aztec mines whose treasure had dazzled the empire of Spain and fired the imagination of all Europe in the great days of the sixteenth century.

It would make a volume of itself, the record of those years and of the years that followed: winning his way with the Yaqui Indians, gaining their confidence through two long years before he attempted to prospect, and finally securing not their tolerance alone but their help. Then, the return to the States and the sale of enough stock in one mine, the Montezuma, to work it. No inconsiderable record for a man just thirty. But Stephen, although he owned nearly two hundred and fifty claims, in twenty mines, felt scarcely nearer to his goal than when he was a boy. So well he knew what stupendous work there remained to be done before those mines were all working as he planned they should be.

As he neared his own quarters, he saw that Hugh Blaikie and his wife were sitting outside their cabin door.

"Heard the news?" he asked them.

They had.

"Of course," Mrs. Blaikie commented, "Lufkin is of what we call the lower class. But he's an Englishman, just the same; and I should think he would be above marrying one of these people."

Blaikie was smoking his short, black briar with energetic puffs which told that his silence was about to be shattered by an eruption.

"Better Britishers than Dan have married natives, in all parts of the Empire," he said. "It's one of the things that make us great colonisers. Instead of living as exiles, sighing for home, we settle down where we are and strike root—and there we stay."

Crystal Blaikie sniffed.

"That's the way we talk to our surplus when we want them to go out to the colonies," she said. "But I notice that most of 'em who get along out there, go back home as soon as they can—and stay there if they can afford it. Britain won't support anybody, of course. But we all want to live there if we have got enough out of the colonies to pay our way at home."

There was reproach in her tone; but Stephen no longer felt, as when he first participated in scenes like this, that he was invading intimate ground whereon no one but a man and his wife ought to be. Crystal's discontent was no secret; when she couldn't upbraid Blaikie, she upbraided any one she thought *particeps criminis* with him in keeping her there.

"Well, I'm not criticising," Stephen interposed. "I'm just wondering—that's all. Dan's a good fellow. I want him to be happy."

"He's got a better chance this way," Hughie declared, "than he'd have any other. This girl is contented here, and any other girl he could get probably wouldn't be."

That was like Hughie. He couldn't deny that Crystal pestered him. But he always liked to make it seem as if he didn't suppose that any woman except a native would endure this life good naturedly.

Blaikie was a Glasgow man, in his mid-forties. He gave scant account of himself; but he was evidently of good stock, and his education was much superior to that of any other man in camp. Thad Stilwell was a Columbia graduate, but he was no more cultured than is the average American university man. Hugh Blaikie was a fair type, mentally, of the English university product: broad, but not flexible; thorough, but not constructive; appreciative, but not assimilative; he admired much that was good, without taking it into his system and making it benefit him. He had been a wanderer on the face of the earth, chiefly in those parts east of Suez where "there ain't no ten commandments and a man may raise a thirst." He was an expert accountant and could write an admirable letter, so he was never long without work when he wanted it; and in his three years at Montezuma mine he had been absolutely steady, efficient and reliable. It was the opinion of his associates that he deserved a lot better than Crystal; most of the men made the same guess about her, and it was a shrewd one. Things that she dropped in her least-guarded talk indicated that they had been married in Shanghai about five years ago. Probably not one of the men in camp could have told how he felt so sure where and how Hughie had met her; she had "run straight" there; but they all felt they knew.

She was a rather unattractive-looking woman of about thirty, sallow and dark-haired, with light grey eyes and a small mouth that drooped at the corners. Her dress was without pride, let alone coquetry. Her simple housekeeping was done by a widowed Mexican woman with a two-year-old child. Crystal was fond of this child, and played with it by the hour. Other interests, she seemed to have none.

It was a strange household, even in that quarter of the

world where strange households are the rule and not the exception.

Blaikie was a tall, large-boned, lean-built man of sandy colouring showing its first hoar-frost. He had deep-set, small blue eyes, the sallow skin of bilious dwellers in the far East, yellow teeth, and a long, drooping, tobacco-stained moustache. His hands were fine, slender, long-fingered, patrician in despite of their freckles and their brown cigarette stains. His isolation seemed to Stephen to be the most tragic in the camp. The other men, varied as had been their experiences, managed to fraternise somehow; but Stephen felt that Blaikie's realest interests, outside his work, were in things that no one else in camp knew or cared about—least of all, Crystal.

Entering the quarters through the mess-room, Stephen found Arrick there alone, playing solitaire with two decks of dirty cards, by the light of a tallow candle set in a bottle neck. Enry and Thad were at the Pinas', dancing with the girls in celebration of Esperanza's betrothal. Arrick, who was a taciturn chap, scarcely glanced up as the Governor passed through.

Stephen's "settin'-room", as the boys facetiously called it, was the nearest approach the camp afforded to homeliness. It had a board floor, spread with some fine skins of mountain lions. There was a fireplace; and about it were several of the native stools, like drums open at one end, on which the men of his mess often sat for an intimate social evening. In one corner of the room was Stephen's drafting-table, rudely built; and on the wall above it was a "home-made" hanging shelf, with his "library." The head of a mountain sheep hung above the fireplace. Art was represented by one fine, decorated earthen jar made by a Nez Perce squaw, one sweet-grass basket woven by a Mexican Indian, one coloured supplement to a holiday edition of the London *Graphic*, and a Navajo blanket spread on a canvas cot which thereby became a "couch." The elegance of this room was not so much in its furnishings, though,

as in its lighting: a student lamp, double, with green porcelain shades. Thad Stilwell declared that this gave the "apartment an air of up-to-dateness that was almost effete."

Stephen lighted the lamp and sat down, to ruminate. From where he sat he could see Arrick in the dark mess-room, laying out his cards by the glimmer of the tallow candle. He wondered if Arrick had ever been married, or if he had ever thought of being married. He must have thought of it! There were times when every man thought of it. Stephen himself had probably given the subject as little consideration as any man; but he realised that he had a quite definite ideal—however and whenever he had evolved it. It seemed probable to him that many men had such ideals. He wondered if any men ever attained them. Or was marriage usually fortuitous? Why had Blaikie married that querulous woman? What did she do for him, that he should endure her?

Man is not by nature a monogamous animal. But generations of forbears who have accepted and defended the monogamous ideal, not infrequently produce men whose thought runs naturally that way. Stephen was such a man. His mental attitude toward women, and the subjection to it of his physical impulses, was the outcome not of his own St. Anthony struggles, but of all the inhibitions of a long line of progenitors. Loyalty was a large part of their creed, and they were—on the whole—rather heroically true to it. Their blood in Stephen's veins inclined him to the same sort of thing. He knew, really, very little about marriage; but such hazy notions of it as he had, had nothing of the insouciance of some men's matrimonial ideas. He knew that men abandon wives of whom they tire. Yet he always thought of such men as probably those irresponsibles who take nothing seriously. He was surprised at himself because it occurred to him to wonder why a man like Blaikie should sit on and on and on, through innumerable evenings like this, facing innumerable like evenings to come, and listen to Crystal's plaining.

Faint sounds of the music at Pina's reached the quarters—throbbing notes of melodies whose rhythm was as sensuous as the impulse which gave it birth. Nature softened those voices and inspired those songs as cunningly as she contrives all her match-making schemes. Stephen had danced with Esperanza, and he was reminded, by the music, how satin-soft her skin was, and how lissome her body as he held her.

Arrick, having failed to make it, grunted, and gathered up his cards to shuffle them for a new trial.

"Doesn't get you, does it?" Stephen called in to him, nodding his head in time with the music.

"No," Arrick answered, curtly.

"Afraid of it?" Stephen pursued, in a teasing tone; but he was really desirous to know.

Arrick shuffled his cards noisily, snapping them together in a practised way.

"No," he said again, more curtly than before.

Stephen was not rebuffed. He knew that Arrick's manner was worse than his meaning.

"Ever know one of those marriages to turn out all right?" he went on.

Arrick was counting cards, laying them out in a rather complicated pattern. He did not answer until the count was through. Then, "No," he replied, conclusively.

Stephen smiled.

"You're a bully good fellow, Arrick," he said amusedly. "If only you weren't so gabby."

There was another silence, not a brief one. Stephen supposed that Arrick did not mean to reply so he resumed his meditation and was proceeding with it on a tangent leading quite away from Arrick, when that worthy spoke.

"Had the gab took out o' me," he said drily. "Reckon a man don't settle down to business, much, until he gets that done to him. Pity more of 'em don't come to it sooner. I'm like Bob Ingersoll: I look around and think how much better it'd be if men could keep their teeth an' lose their

passions. Nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand of 'em fritter away enough of their lives thinkin' about women, to make 'em rich and happy if they'd been in better business. I thank my stars I got through early—while my teeth was sound!"

"Feel perfectly sure you are through?" Stephen questioned, wondering what it was that had happened to Arrick.

"Yep."

"How can you tell?"

"By the way I feel when I see other men makin' fools o' themselves."

"I don't believe," Stephen protested, "that you can tell that way. Doesn't every man's love affair always look foolish to other fellows? The few I've known have looked like messes to me. But I never supposed that meant I had no susceptibility."

Arrick "got it," this deal; he now owed himself two dollars and eighty-six cents, and he was feeling genially affluent.

"I've sometimes thought about you, Gov'nor—in that way. I put you down in my mind as one who hadn't had his fling. And there was times when I kind o' thought you might get through without havin' it. But I don't know—you keep it pretty dark, but I believe you've got a vein of the stuff in you that you'll prob'ly have to work through before you can get rid of it."

Stephen laughed heartily.

"You make me think," he declared, "of a little girl who lived next door to me when I was about five. She asked me, one day, how many diseases I had had—and enumerated her own accomplishments, from mumps to scarlet fever. I had never had any of them. 'My!' she said—she seemed quite horrified—'you better begin. You got to have 'em all, you know. And it's better to have 'em when you're young, and get 'em over with!' I remember the guilty feeling she gave me—how negligent she made me feel. But it seems as if I'd never had time to get started with my

diseases. Do you suppose I'll have to have them all—including love?"

Arrick grinned.

"You may skip some o' them," he granted, gathering up his cards—for he was a wise gambler, and quit while he owed himself money—"but I'm afraid you won't escape petticoat fever. Something tells me you're a good subject for it, and that when it hits you it will hit you hard."

"Thanks for the consolation," Stephen said. And he meant it. He had no wish to escape what Arrick called "petticoat fever." It seemed to him that a man's life was arid without it. Perhaps it was well, as Arrick said, when a man had it behind him. But not to have it at all would be a sad lack, he felt sure.

Arrick said good-night and was off to the bunkhouse. It was nearing nine-thirty, and Stephen ought to have been sleepy; but he wasn't. He stared up at the coloured supplement to *The Graphic*. The painting from which it was reproduced was by an artist famed for his pictures of British domesticity in the upper middle classes. This home scene was in one of those settings which centuries of home-loving folk have evolved; it was mellowed by time and hallowed by memories of generation after generation passing on to their children their ideals of dignified living. The room itself appealed tremendously to Stephen; it realised his notion of what a home should be, made concrete his heretofore vague memories and vaguer hopes. And the people in it appealed to him. The man looked a fine type of those men whose devotion to their homes has been the cornerstone of most of the enduring good in the world. And there was a beautiful boy, a little lad of perhaps six, to whom his father was telling tales of King Arthur and the Round Table Knights, while the boy looked up at his father with a worshipful expression, and the lovely wife and mother beamed on them both, as one whose cup of joy was brimming. Stephen had liked the picture first because it reminded him of that golden year when Alice had made

his life so beautiful; later, he drifted almost without realizing it into dreaming about that picture as a future possibility. He was not aware how many hours he had sat staring up at it and vaguely indulging the hopes it encouraged.

The men in camp had joked about the picture, mildly. Lufkin had said it was a wonder no painter selected for his theme "one of them far frequenter moments of a father's life when he's teaching high ideals to Sonny with a barrel stave."

But Blaikie rebuked him sharply.

"It's the best moments of our lives that we all need to remember," he said, "the times when we touched the highest. And it's the office of the painters and the poets and the other preachers, to keep weak, sinful men reminded of the high places. We need no man's help to make us mindful of the blamed trivialities that fetter too many of us. It's the big moments that count."

It was Blaikie's philosophy that a man's life is rich when he can count a goodly number of big moments—moments in which he has scaled the heights or plumbed the depths; that the multitude of little moments add practically nothing to the sum total of what he is.

Stephen had sometimes tried to estimate his life in Blaikie's terms. He had had enough of the experiences usually considered romantic and thrilling and picturesque, to furnish forth a small series of adventure stories. Yet they all had seemed prosaic enough to him. Emotionally, he had lived scarcely at all. As he looked back, he could find nothing which seemed to have moved him, absolutely and profoundly, since his passionate grief for Alice. His father's death had been of the nature of a Providential relief. The rest of his life had been as emotional as the working out of any geometric problem or architectural plan.

"Not much chance, here," he reflected, "for big moments of the sort Blaikie means and the painters and poets describe. But when I get a few more of the mines working,

and the smelter going, I'm going out to tackle the world from another angle, to adventure in another sphere."

And the prospect, when he had time to think about it—which was not often—constituted his principal recreation; just as, years ago, the over-worked farmer's boy or mechanic that he was, had kept himself buoyed with dreams of mining in Mexico.

Dan, returning to the bunkhouse after the others were abed, saw across the cottonwood yard the green-shaded lights still burning in the Gov'nor's "settin'-room." He crossed to the mess-room door, and called in,

"H'lo, Gov'nor!"

"Hello!" Stephen answered, cheerily. "Come in, happy man, and let's have a look at you."

He thought he knew why Dan was there; and not to let him say his say would be the refinement of cruelty. A man wishing to speak in his own defence is entitled to a hearing.

"I know how you feel about it, Gov'nor," Dan began boldly. "I knew it before I told you. And I want you to know I don't resent it. From your point of view, it's true. But from mine, it ain't. Knockin' around minin' camps like I've done, I've seen a lot; and I figure out that men are of three sorts, as far as women are concerned. There's those that almost any women can satisfy for a little while, and prob'ly no woman could hold—just human animals, they are; not so decent as most of the savages I've known. Then, even on the edges of things like where I've lived, I've met men like you who've got an ideal, a dream, and are holdin' out for it. But the majority are in my class, I think: the world's full of women one of whom's likely to content us as much as any other would; we don't expect perfection; we just get in the notion of marryin'—havin' a home and a wife and kids—and when we're feelin' that way—I don't want you to think I'm not in love with Esperanza. I am. But I'm not the kind of fellow that takes love the way you prob'ly would. You're the sort,

Gov'nor, that would get desp'rate in a misfit. But I wear things so easy I don't know whether they fit or not—unless they *pinch*. And I figure Esperanza won't do that. She may get fat, and slack. But I shan't mind. It'd be havin' a woman like Blaikie's hung 'round my neck that'd drive me daft. I'd be beatin' up a woman like that, before I knew it. Don't you worry about me. I ain't mooney. I've done some thinkin' about this, and I figure it'll come out about right."

Stephen sat, his left foot crossing his right knee, and plied back and forth like a razor on a strop his opened case-knife on the edge of his thick boot-sole. The action was mechanical, rhythmical—an aid to meditation. He was listening to Dan, and he was thinking, too. His clothes were nearly identical with Lufkin's—khaki shirt, baggy short trousers of khaki buckled well below the knee; high brown shoes laced up above the calf—yet there was a striking difference between them, as Dan was well aware. It was manifest in the way Stephen used his hands; fine, strong, virile hands they were and capable; but the hands of a conscious ruler of men, of a man who made his dreams come true. Stephen was five feet ten and a half inches high, and weighed one hundred and sixty pounds. His body was beautifully proportioned and his movements were a pleasure to watch, they were so free and yet so accurate—there was no fumbling, no waste energy, no indecisive results about them. Brain and body co-ordinated surely rather than quickly, though he was far from being slow. These were the things one felt about Stephen even before one became aware that his hair was brown, his eyes a warm and uncommon grey, arched by well-placed brows of just the right thickness and fringed by lashes of unusual length. The face was such as Titian loved to paint, when he could get surcease from the heavy-jowled Spanish Hapsburgs or the nut-cracker profile of Francis of Valois; a face vaguely yet certainly akin to The Man With the Glove, and the Duke of Norfolk, and that nameless man in the Munich Pina-

cothek whom one goes back and back to look at—dissimilar faces, and yet all of them strangely luminous, as if designed not to conceal thought and purpose but to reveal indomitable spirit, intense desire.

Although they were not frequently analytical, these men who worked under him felt the type that he was and knew him better, in some respects, than he knew himself. For he had been too intent, thus far, on accomplishment to think much of himself in relation to anything but this achievement.

Dan had made the Gov'nor think more definitely about marriage than he had ever thought before. He was still thinking about it when he went to sleep that night.

CHAPTER III

ELFIE knows heaps of dandy fellows," Rosamund purred, holding her pretty head slightly on one side as she eyed an effect on the dress-form whereon she was pinning the waist of an evening gown. The gown was a delicate shade of pale blue taffeta, and there wasn't much to the waist, for Rosamund's neck and shoulders were beautiful.

"Well, after you've met your fate, maybe there'll be some others who will want to come and see your sisters," Mrs. Harrod said. "You must tell them all what lovely sisters you have."

Her eagerness over Rosamund's prospects in paying a visit to a popular girl friend in Los Angeles, was shadowed only by her regret that all three of her girls could not have the same opportunity. But even if Elfie Davis had asked them all, only one could have accepted. As it was, the family resources were being taxed to the last penny to send Rosamund forth for conquest; and in addition to the new clothes she was getting, her wardrobe for Los Angeles was to include the best of all the three other women owned: Mrs. Harrod's treasured bits of real lace, her fan with the mother-of-pearl sticks, and her Chinese embroidered shawl; Lucile's tan-coloured reception dress, her rose-velour evening coat, her Spanish lace scarf, her big black velvet hat, and her pink satin slippers; Patricia's new negligee, her party-bag, her coral beads; and so on.

To Mrs. Harrod's suggestion about Rosamund inciting some "dandy fellows" to come and see her sisters, Lucile returned an untranscribable sniff of disbelief. She was the oldest of the Harrod girls, and had the fewest illusions. She was twenty-two.

"Men worth having are too busy to come down to a place like this looking for girls," she declared, rather sullenly. "If they're any good, they're tending to business right there in Los Angeles. And I reckon there are girls enough there to go 'roun'."

"Well, I know I don't want one who tends to business *too* much," Rosamund demurred. "Look at Arabella Lane! Her husband don't dance and he don't play cards, an' he never wants to go out. But I suppose he'd have a fit if Arabella went with anybody else. I'd die if I was married to a man like that!"

"He gives *her* plenty of everything," Lucile retorted. "And most of the fellows who are around at the dances an' all, are like what Roy Dixon said to Peaches: 'I got nothin' to offer you but a sober, industrious and frugal father.'"

Patricia—"Peaches" in the family circle and among her intimates—flushed.

"Roy says his father was awful wild when he was young," she averred.

"Well, some men get over it and some don't," Lucile said sharply, "and Roy strikes me as one of the kind that *don't*."

Peaches was on the point of making a return thrust, but her mother intervened.

"I want my girls to have romance in 'their lives," she sighed, gently. "But I don't want them to be poor and always pinched. It's very hard to keep romantic when you never have quite enough money to pay your bills."

She was a large, inert sort of woman who had faded softly. Her once-brilliant auburn hair was paled to a sandy tone; her skin had lost its bloom but not its delicacy; her contours were indistinct, blurr-y. But she regretted these things not at all. She was re-living her youth thrice over in her daughters. All her pride, all her ardour was in them and for them. For herself she lamented nothing; but for them she was regretful of their father's inability to give

them the gauds, the pleasures, the opportunities she felt that they deserved.

Jed Harrod was a Georgian, a long, lank, lazy kind of man—mentally, physically, emotionally, without snap. He was good-natured, indolently tolerant and effortlessly kind. There was a pathological reason for his easy-goingness; but neither he nor his family knew it. They knew he was malarial, but they did not account thereby for his slowness.

He was a United States assayer at Nogales, on the Mexican border; and he earned about three thousand a year. This was not penury, but it was close to it for a man with three beautiful and ambitious daughters. The Harrods owned their home, a comfortable, two-story frame house, painted white and set in a pretty yard with palmettos and flower-borders. Jed was a vestryman of the Episcopal church; he had been raised a Baptist, but "nicer" people went to the Episcopal church in Nogales, and Jed went where he was taken. He was treasurer of the Social Club, and if he had not raised any appreciable amount for the little adobe clubhouse where his daughters danced and his wife and daughters played bridge, he had at least taken scrupulous care of the funds other members raised. Meticulously honest, he was; and in anything that touched business, exact. In the company of congenial men, he was droll in a clean, kind way. A bystander and observer in most things outside his office, he saw in an impersonal, unrelated way much that went on around him, and had a modest gift for describing it. That was Jed Harrod, the father of the Harrod girls; a grizzly grey man who always seemed to have shrunk after he bought his clothes.

"I certainly will be a happy woman," Mrs. Harrod frequently told her girls, "when I see you all settled in lovely homes of your own. Seems like there's nothin' I look forward to like I do to visitin' you-all an' seein' how well you've done. Your father hasn't ever had the sort of ambition I've had for you. But it seems to me he has less an' less all the time. He ain't well, and he's gettin' on. My hope an'

prayer is that before he gets so he can't earn, you girls'll all be provided for. This isn't the kind of place I would have chose to bring up three girls like you. But your father seemed to think he had to be here. If you get out of here, it'll be our ambition that took you, and not his."

Rosamund's invitation to visit in Los Angeles a girl friend whose family had moved over a year ago from Nogales to the city of the angels, seemed like an opportunity not for her alone but, if she managed well, for all the girls. If Rosamund captured a Los Angeles man, she would—of course—have her sisters there with her a great deal, in her new home. In almost any event, she ought to make some sort of opening for them to visit there.

And so, partly for Rosamund's sake and partly each for her own, they all joined forces in getting her ready for the visit that they hoped would be fateful.

The late-September afternoon was very warm, and the Harrod women, busy with Rosamund's sewing, were dressed for comfort and not for appearance. But it was wearing on toward that time of day when somebody might call.

"Peaches, you put a dress on so you can go down if anybody comes," her mother urged. Their servant, a coloured woman, lived "off the place," in southern fashion, and usually left after the dinner dishes were done and a few preparations made for the simple supper which Mrs. Harrod set out.

Peaches disliked sewing, and was glad to be relieved.

"I think I'll telephone Miriam Slade to come on over an' show me that new kind of salad-dressin' she was tellin' about," Peaches called in from the room where she was doing up her hair.

"I wish you would," replied Lucile. "I have to entertain the Friday Bridge Circle next week, and I *declare* I don't know what to give them. What kind of salad did Miriam say it's good on? I wish I could think of something brand new—that we could get in this town! I'm so sick of mayonnaise I could *die*! And yet you have to come back to it,

nearly every time—like chicken salad at a wedding. Most people must think marriage wouldn't be legal without it! But there isn't going to be any chicken salad at *my* wedding, I can tell you. If I can't think of something else, I'll stay single."

"I believe Janey Lewis is going to have it," Peaches giggled. Janey was to be a bride the next week.

"I was in Jane's yesterday," Rosamund said. "Her twenty-seventh cut-glass bowl had just come—most of them from a distance so she can't return them."

"I think it's terrible," Lucile declared, "for people to use such a little sense in buying wedding presents. Why can't they try to find out what you want?"

"If you were me," queried Rosamund, "would you wear this," indicating the blue taffeta, "to Jane's wedding; or would you save it for Los Angeles?"

"I'd save it," Lucile replied promptly. "Suppose somebody should spill coffee on it—or chicken salad. And *do* keep your eyes open at parties, Rosamund, so you can tell me about the decorations and the favours and all. You get so excited, and all a body can get out of you is that 'everything was perr-fectly lovely.'"

"You have such a wonderful taste for details, Lucile," her mother murmured, admiringly. "I certainly will be disappointed if you don't have money to do things the way you like to, some day."

"And if you don't get me some decent Val lace," Lucile went on, accepting without comment her mother's compliment, "I'll never forgive you. Remember! I gave you the only good-looking piece I had, to put on your new nightie."

"I will," Rosamund promised. "And that reminds me: did anybody hem the bottom of that nightie?"

Nobody did. Hemming the bottom of anything was a chore all the Harrods disliked, and if it was done at all, Mrs. Harrod was the one who did it. The girls, when they had got a thing together, "gotten the effect," they said, never were willing to waste stitches on a part that would not

show. They hated hooks and eyes, too; and buttons and buttonholes infrequently existed for them. Lucile embroidered very well, and had at least half a dozen shirt waists on which she had embroidered elaborate patterns; but not one of these waists was finished at its bottom edge, and they all fastened "behind" with gilt baby-pins.

The Harrod girls were much alike, in many ways. They all inherited from their mother so much and from their father so little, that they seemed scarcely to belong to him at all. Every one of them had the glorious chestnut hair, the milk-white skin, and the childishly small, even, pearly teeth which had characterised Etta Harrod twenty-odd years ago. All of them were rather above than below medium height and very slender. Lucile and Rosamund were so nearly of the same measurements that they could wear one another's dresses, gloves, shoes, easily. Peaches was blue-eyed, but both the others had eyes of golden colour like mellow old Rhine wine. Their hands were large with prominent knuckles and sinews which gave them a strange look of age. But their feet were small, shapely, and very high in the instep, and they were inordinately vain of them.

Most persons thought Lucile the prettiest and liked Rosamund the best. Peaches was popular in her very young "set," but looked on as rather a child still. Rosamund was lively, fun-loving, and abandoned herself utterly to whatever engaged her attention for the moment or the hour; but she was warm, by nature, affectionate and easy to be fond of, whereas Lucile practically never lost sight for a moment of self-interest. Rosamund's demand, like Peaches', was for a good time in the world; Lucile's for a good place.

That Lucile had few beaux was at least as much because she thought little of the Nogales eligibles as because they were little attracted by her. There was, she frequently declared, not a man in town she'd think of marrying. Yet Lucile was almost desperately anxious to be married. She wanted a thousand things which she could not hope to get

otherwise than through marriage; and she wanted to *be* married. Candid avowals were not yet in fashion, and Lucile's talks about the experiences of marriage were very much *sub rosa*. Nevertheless, the girls she knew discussed such things a good deal, and Lucile—who was slightly over-sexed in temperament—was morbidly rather than wholesomely curious to unlock the door behind which those things were hid which she as a nice young lady was supposed to know nothing about.

Mrs. Harrod had a few standards of desirability besides the financial one. She hoped with all her heart that none of her girls would marry a drunkard. Of course, some very nice, good men drank too much now and then; that couldn't be helped. But a confirmed drunkard was awful, even if he were very rich—although a rich one is infinitely more bearable than a poor one. Drunkenness was more economic than moral or esthetic, with her. And there were degrees of immorality and gaming fever about which everybody talked. It would be terrible to have everybody talking about your husband or your son-in-law in that way; yet a great many rich men seemed of that sort. It was perplexing. But her pretty theory was that any man who had the felicity to marry one of her girls would almost inevitably be a good man because he would be so happy. She had bred the girls to this theory, too.

And she had taught them, almost from their infancy, that men love "womanly women"; by which she meant clinging, dependent, coy, cloying women. She had been much impressed once at the Ladies' Foreign Mission Meeting, with hearing why the Chinese bind girls' feet. "Even in China," she reflected, "men love to feel that the women they adore are dependent on them—sweet and helpless, so they can be loved and tenderly cared for." After that, she thought better of China than she had ever thought before, and was wonderfully encouraged in her belief in soul-binding as an Occidental woman's charm—although, of course, she did not call it by that name.

The door-bell rang, and Peaches flew to answer it. In a few minutes she returned.

"It's Tom Dabney," she announced; "and he wants me to go ridin' with him."

The Harrod girls did very much as they pleased, but that was because their mother seldom dissented from anything they proposed. Nevertheless, they usually asked her; and Peaches, in particular, was supposed to be still of the age where it would not have been "nice" for her to accept an invitation without asking her mother. Peaches readily saw the value of this. It gave a girl a protected, cherished air—and protected girls were the most desired.

Mrs. Harrod was running the hem on Rosamund's new nightie, and she halted her whirring machine.

"You've been ridin' with Tom twice this week," she reminded. "I wouldn't go again, honey. Make him wait. It don't do for them to get to thinkin' you'll go whenever they beckon. They never think anythin' of a girl they can always get for the askin'. Tom's a nice boy—one o' the nicest in town—an' I'd hate for him to lose interest in you through thinkin' you're too easy. Tell him you're helpin' Rosamund an' can't go to-day."

Peaches wanted the ride, and she liked Tom; but her mother's wisdom appealed to her. So she sent Tom away.

"He was awfully disappointed," she reported, rejoining the group upstairs. "He said he had somethin' ever so important to tell me."

Mrs. Harrod smiled. "I reckon it'll keep," she said. "And anyway, you don't want Tom tellin' you anything *too* important—yet."

"Not till you've been to Los Angeles," Rosamund reminded, meaningfully.

"I wouldn't snub Tom *too* much on account of Los Angeles," Lucile warned.

"Not too much," her mother assented. "Just enough! Tom's got a good deal of pride. He might never risk a second refusal."

"If you could only know," Peaches sighed, "how much 'just enough' is!"

She was so tragically serious about it that they all laughed.

"Charming women mostly have a sort of instinct that tells them that," her mother assured her, in a tone full of confidence that none of her daughters would find themselves deficient in this wisdom.

At supper that evening, Jed Harrod was the bearer of news which never failed to interest his family.

"Stephen Bellas's in town," he announced. "He was in the office to-day. Looks to me like he wasn't a bit well."

"Did you ask him up?" Mrs. Harrod hastened to inquire.

Jed grinned. He knew what his women were "up to," as he expressed it. But he had a notion that it was what all women were up to, everlastingly and everywhere; and while they were about it he hoped they *would* "land" Bellas, for he was a fine fellow and his holdings were the richest in that part of the country.

"Sure, I asked him!" he chuckled. "And he said to thank you an' say he'd come if he could, but he had an awful lot to do here. Mebbe he'll stroll roun' this evenin'."

He winked at Lucile, who flushed angrily and began clearing dishes from the table.

"I wish," she cried to her mother, in the kitchen, "that papa wouldn't be so *funny*—or what he *thinks* is funny! It is so indelicate. And it's enough to nauseate Mr. Bellas, and keep him from ever coming here."

"I know," her mother sympathised. "I'll speak to your father about it."

"I daresay it's too late, now," Lucile retorted, bitterly. "He probably has the idea that we're trying to trap him, and he'll keep away."

"Oh, I don't believe he has, honey," Mrs. Harrod cried, consolingly. "Your father likes to tease you, but he wouldn't let Mr. Bellas suspect anything. . . . Put on your new dress, anyway, in case he *does* come."

Jed was on the front porch, smoking his pipe, when his wife sought him out for remonstrance.

"Well," he began, good-humouredly, "what's Lucile mad about?"

Mrs. Harrod sat down in one of the porch rockers, and fanned herself as she rocked.

"It's nothin' to joke about, Jed," she said reprovingly. "Your girl's whole life and happiness may be involved. Sometimes, I think you don't fully realise how lovely your girls are—how much above the ordinary. You—we haven't been able to do so much for them—give 'em many advantages like they ought to've had. But they're so beautiful an' sweet an' good, maybe they'll be able to do for themselves, in spite of all. Seems like I'd lay right down an' die if they don't marry well—they're so worthy of the best."

Jed felt this lecture was uncalled-for.

"Ain't I tryin' to do all I can?" he demanded. "What the deuce's the matter? Here I lasso the biggest catch in these parts and ask him up here—and you-all act like I'd driven him off with a gun."

"You can do worse for a girl's chances with a man like that," Mrs. Harrod pronounced, gravely, "than draw a gun on him. The thing that'd scare him would be to get the notion that he was bein' courted. Men like to do their own."

"Then why—?" Jed began. But he was not allowed to finish.

"They like to *think* they're doin' it," his wife corrected. "It's your business, all right, to get Mr. Bellas up here. But it's your most particular business not to let him think you're coaxing him."

Jed slouched moodily into a posture expressive of despair.

"What do you think I am?" he growled. "A Japanese ambassador? I better beat it before I do any more damage."

"Men are funny," Mrs. Harrod commented to her daughters, later, when they joined her on the porch. "Before they

go off to enjoy themselves, they always like to stir up somethin' so's they can feel their women-folks make home unbearable. Now, I don't mind your father's goin' off downtown, evenin's—it's a relief to have him out o' the way. But for twenty-two years, or so, he's always seemed to feel he couldn't go till he got himself worked up to where he could tell himself that I drove him to it. Romance is lovely—to read about. But I certainly feel sorry for the women who're tryin' to extract much of it from *men*."

CHAPTER IV

WOMEN are queer," Jed Harrod ruminated, on his way down town. "Don't one of 'em want to play a straight game. Crazy critters! Do they think there's a man anywhere that don't see through 'em? I could tell 'em—but they think I don't know! Think they know more about men than I do! But if I was to set up as knowin' women better'n they do, there'd be lively times at our house!"

Descendant of males—thousands of generations of them—who fought for possession of the female desired, Jed's warring instincts were no longer aroused against other males but with them against their common enemy.

He knew his daughters were pretty, and he was proud of them, in a way. He appreciated their eagerness to get husbands who could keep them supplied with all the stuff that pretty women like. He was even willing to act like a good game dog and run their quarry into the open for them. But he didn't like their ideas of catching a man in a durned trap like a pole-cat. If he was worth marrying, why wasn't he worth stalking as one does decent game?

"Why do they want to bait us with the notion that we're lords o' creation and they can't resist us—then, soon's we've sworn to cherish 'em, start in to make us feel how no-'count we are an' how they threw themselves away on us?"

A mischievous grin spread slowly on Jed's face, as he reflected how mad they'd be at home if he gave Bellas a fair warning. But it narrowed and faded, as he thought of the consequences if he were found out—as he was all too certain to be.

The national boundary line crosses the main street of

Nogales, and the railway runs parallel with that street. There is a depot and custom house on the Mexican side of the line, and a depot and custom house on the American side, a stone's throw north. Almost on the boundary and fronting east on the main street, there was in those days, a decade ago, the town's biggest "joint" for drinking, gambling, dancing, and—and other things. The back door of this place opened on the railway yards; from the side door it was but four strides into Mexico. The whole west side of the street for a block or two, was a succession of "joints." Opposite, there were hotels and wholesale houses and banks and stores, apparently undismayed by their proximity to the wide-open, flaring and noisy haunts of every imaginable and unimaginable vice. There was at least this to be said of iniquity in Nogales: there was nothing furtive about it. Everybody had the same chances, and everybody knew which of them all the other fellows took. You could be any degree of a sinner there, according to your capacity for sin. But you couldn't be very much of a hypocrite—at least, not for long.

All the male population wandered in and out of the joints every evening; they were the forum not for the town alone but for all that section, both sides of the border. There one discussed business, politics, racing, mining, gambling, women—anything he was interested in, broadly speaking. Not to go thereabouts was much worse, in the degree of isolation attendant, than not taking any newspaper. Indeed, newspapers were rather superfluous, if some male of the family went downtown every evening. For, if there were some things that he did not report, there were a great many that he could, and did; and if he was a good gossip—as most of them were—his account was likely to have many advantages above one in print; not the least of them being that if a subject proved interesting he could be prodded with questions about it or even sent back to learn more.

Jed was on good terms with every one. His easy-going amiability offended no one, took no offence, kept him out

of feuds either as participant or partisan, and permitted him to drift around in his semi-detached way, mildly welcome everywhere, missed nowhere. He was neither amorphous nor ascetic, but his pleasure in these nightly rounds of his was no more carnal than that of his wife at the Ladies' Missionary Aid. He liked to know what was goin' on, and to talk about it. He liked a social glass or two, but needed no great self-restraint to keep him from worse. And he sure did like to play poker, if he could round up a few fellows who liked to play square, the way he did.

The tinny pianos were making a combined assault upon the ears of every one within a radius of several blocks, as Jed neared his destination. Here, as he passed, one pounded and crashed out a dance tune, to the accompaniment of castanets and of feet shuffling on a sanded floor; there, a negro's voice, its naturally soft tones all gone raucous, rose above the racket of wild banjo strumming, in one of the most bacchanalian coon songs of the hour; further on, one could catch strains of plaintive Spanish melody, played by guitars and sung by a quartette of young Mexicans in high peaked sombreros.

In every place there was the sound of girls' voices, the clink of glassware at the bar, the croaking cry of the croupier at the wheel, the click of pool and billiard balls, the rumble of men's talk.

Jed sauntered into and out of one place after another until he came upon Stephen, standing back of the fringe 'round a roulette table, watching the wild play of a girl for whom a mining man persuaded of her luck was putting up silver dollars from an apparently inexhaustible supply.

Stephen's status in these places was interesting. He never touched liquor, he never gambled, he never went with a girl; and yet he mingled with everybody in a free and easy way, without aloofness; equally without contempt for them or from them. His bitter youth had determined his attitude toward drink; he not only forswore it for himself, but he ran a "dry" camp—which every one in northern Mexico had

assured him he couldn't do, although the aftermath of pay-days was the despair of all the other mine-managers. But he was a man of the sort who can carry through a determination like that and never make himself disliked among drinking men. He assailed no man's contrary opinions, and no man assailed his. "Live and let live" was a favorite slogan in that dawning social system of the border, and he practised his preferences, they theirs. They thought he was "missing a lot," but he felt glad it made no appeal to him. His interest was back in the heart of those treasure hills, and he was here only to serve that interest. Many of these men around him had their interest here, and went back to the hills (if they went at all) only to get more money for gaming and girls and wine. He felt they were "missing a lot"; but they were content to miss it.

Nearly every new girl who came tried, in a bravado way, to attract him. It was not easy for them to understand him: young, good-looking, rich, alone, on the edge of the world where most every one was "easy," no parson, no prig, yet steadfast in some resolution the reason for which they could not guess. The girl called Jessamine knew, though. She was college-bred and a cosmopolite; she had lived in many places where women study the weaknesses of men.

"I've seen them like that, before," she said. "They've got an ideal, and they just can't see anything else. But wait! They think they've found her; they marry her; they are disappointed—no woman could ever be what they're looking for—and when they get sore against all women and hate us all, then they come to us. And nine times out of ten, when a man marries one of us girls, it's that kind of a man—later on! Expecting nothing from us, he gets carried off his feet when he finds we're human and that some of us know what it means to love a man."

It was Jessamine whose wild play Stephen was watching when Jed Harrod came. She was one of the girls Stephen most enjoyed talking with—she had been around so much

and knew so many things—and when he found her absorbed at the green-baize table with the spinning wheel, he stood fascinated, following her play.

At a table near-by, Thad Stilwell, who had come up with Stephen, was buying wine for Pearl Dorking; and although the evening was scarce begun, Thad was well started on the spree which would end only when his last cent was gone; then Stephen would take him back to Montezuma where, after a week of moping and plaining, Thad would go back to work and be good for perhaps three months, possibly for six.

Stephen was fond of Jed Harrod, and warmly grateful to him for many a kindness and encouragement in the days when Stephen made his first trips back to the border with specimen rock from his claims. He smiled welcomingly at the older man when he entered; and Jed went over and stood by him.

Together they watched Jessamine for a while, then drifted to a table and sat down, Jed with a schooner of beer and Stephen with a lemon and seltzer.

"Make it a long one, and extra sour," Stephen ordered. "I've an alkali thirst."

"You don't look up to par, boy," Jed ventured, in a fatherly tone.

"I'm not," Stephen admitted. "All the ambition I ever had seems to have oozed out o' me. Don't know when I've minded heat as I have this last month. I'm drowsy and dopey all the time. Maybe I'll go out to the coast and try some sea or mountain air for a couple of weeks."

"I would, boy," Jed urged; "you look pretty seedy."

After that, obeying Stephen's evident desire, he said nothing more on the subject.

Thad sat where they could see him, and in the friendly silence that fell between them as they drank and watched, both men observed him closely.

"Pearl's fond of Stilwell," Jed remarked, after a while.

"Seems so," Stephen assented.

"Think he's interested in her—except when he's spreeing?"

Stephen shrugged.

"I don't know," he answered; "but I hardly think so."

"There's something about Pearl," Jed went on, "that's not just like most of the girls here. She always struck me as a girl that came here not because she liked this sort of thing, but in a kind of spunk at some one. I figured out she was over that, now—whatever it was—an' that this doesn't really interest her, an' she's lookin' for something else."

Stephen smiled, sceptically.

"Why hit on Thad?" he asked. "He has nothing. You don't suppose Pearl would marry him and come to Montezuma?"

"Prob'ly not—no! That don't strike me as her lay. But she may coax him to stay here."

"I don't believe he could earn a living here."

"Perhaps she'd be willing to earn it for them both."

Stephen's tired-looking grey eyes flashed sudden fire.

"Thad's not a cur!" he declared. "He's weak—in spots—but he comes of gentle, fine-thinking people. It couldn't be in him to do a thing like that. There must be some kinds of villainy a man just *can't* stoop to if the blood of clean-living ancestors flows in his veins!"

"I hope so," Jed sighed. "But that boy's adrift, three thousand miles from home; and those girls can get a terrible grip on a man, sometimes."

"He's not three thousand miles from his inheritance," Stephen replied. "And anyway, I don't believe she's after anything but his earnings."

"That's what women mostly are after—best an' worst," Jed muttered dolefully. "Maybe I'm all wrong about this; but sometimes it has seemed to me that if there were women anywhere that wanted a man just because they needed him to love, these girls were likelier to be that sort than—than girls like mine are!"

The treasonable word was spoken; and the moment he had done it, Jed was ashamed. Was that the chivalry which was more of a shibboleth in his world than any commandment of the decalogue?

But Stephen's mind was so far from Jed Harrod's girls that he did not even hear that part of Jed's utterance. He was watching Pearl as she watched Thad. Her look was tell-tale to Stephen, now.

"Why," he quizzed Harrod, "if a woman loves a man, does she encourage his weakness?"

Jed screwed his face in a shrewd expression wherewith he frequently tried to indicate his worldly-wiseness.

"In his weakness she gets him, boy!" he answered, oracularly. "When he's strong, she can't touch him."

Stephen made a gesture of disgust.

"Then she's still a vampire," he said. "If she doesn't care more for his best self than for anything else in the world, she doesn't love him—she doesn't know what love *means*. If that girl knew what love is, she'd use every art she has in the world to keep Thad from making a beast of himself—to keep him from the black hell of self-hate he goes through every time he does this. *I* can't keep him from it! All *I* can do is to take him back and steady him till he's on his feet again. But a woman—! I don't know, Harrod; maybe I'm queer—I've lived by myself so much, and just thought things out in my own way, nights under the desert stars and such times; but it has always seemed to me that women have—or *ought* to have!—the sort of spiritual guardianship of the world—the keys of heaven, you might say; so that through the love they give us and the love they make us give them, we find our best selves and—and—try to do better than we could ever have done alone. When I find a woman who will look at me as I look at the hills in Mexico and say, 'There's treasure there—I'll get it out, some day!' then you'll see me sticking to her like Jacob to his angel, and not letting her go until she blesses me."

It was the first time that Stephen had ever formulated

the things he had thought out "under the desert stars, and such times"; and if he had ever pre-visioned the occasion when he would tell those waking dreams, it is certain that he never foresaw it as happening in this garish brothel on the border and wrung from him by idle speculation about a lewd woman and a loose man.

The incongruity did not fret him to-night, however. His mind was in a state where realities and unrealities were strangely interchanged; near things were half blurred, half sharpened; far things were magnified until they seemed close. It was the condition when fever is just invading the veins.

The next day Stephen, dead to all realities, was taken to the hospital with a typhoid temperature of 104.

CHAPTER V

ON a warm October day, Stephen half-consciously brushed at a fly which had lighted on his nose. The fly came back, and Stephen essayed to wave it away again—but he was too weak. He opened his eyes, briefly; then closed them wearily and tried to think.

He was on a cot, in a small, low room with a door, and a window beside it, opening upon a patio. The floor of his room was of white pine planking, rather rudely finished and fitted. The rough plaster walls, of grayish colour, were unbroken on three sides, giving a conventual quality to the cell-shaped room; above the cot hung a big, black crucifix; on the walls were two little holy pictures of consolatory purpose. Beside the cot was a medicine-stand. Drawn back against the farthest wall a low, straight-backed chair sat stiffly, and spoke volumes of austerity and rigour.

The door was open, and through it one who lay on the cot could glimpse, first a ray of sunlight which had pierced some crevice in the roof of the portico and lay like a golden arrow on the hard-trodden brown dirt; then, beyond the cloister-like portico that ran around the four-square enclosure, a hint of greenness, and a huddled human or two basking in the mellow warmth.

Stephen's first glance conveyed to his struggling-back consciousness the hospital impression. Exhausted with the effort of that co-ordination, he waited, dreamily semi-conscious again. A second glance strengthened the impression: *he* was in a hospital. What had happened? Again a wait—exhaustion. Then a more determined effort to remember. . . . He had been at Ed Walsh's . . . last night. . . . Pearl. . . . Thad. . . . ! Where was Thad? Ah, yes! That was what he was trying to remember: Where was Thad?

A nun passed the door, looked in, entered. She was an oldish woman with flesh like a withered winesap and dulled hazel eyes. Her coarse serge habit somehow suggested mummy-cloth. Her hands were labour-stained, and the fingernails were dirty. She was carrying a bowl of mutton broth. The smell of it gave Stephen one distinct suggestion.

"I'm hungry," he said.

Sister Assumption acted as if she had not heard him, and went on her way with the mutton broth.

Encountering Sister Annunciata she said:

"Mr. Bellas is conscious."

To Sister Annunciata Stephen repeated, this time a little querulously, "I'm hungry."

"Well, that's good," she answered cheerfully. "We'll see what you can have to eat."

She said nothing about his condition—just nodded approvingly at him as if he had agreeably fulfilled some expectations of hers.

Stephen thought she looked familiar.

"Where's Thad?" he asked.

"He's all right," she replied encouragingly. "He'll be coming to see you pretty soon."

She was writing on a tablet—a chart—and he watched her wonderingly.

"Where have I seen you before?" he asked weakly.

She smiled—and kept on writing. Doubtless she should have told him not to talk; but she didn't—her manner was gently sedative, and more effective than any soothing words could have been.

"Here—perhaps," she said as one, preoccupied, answers a questioning child.

"I've never been here before," he demurred.

She laid down the chart and came closer to him. There was healing in her presence—she was like a mother-universal, calm, patient, tender, wise.

Something flickered in Stephen's brain—the last upleap of those fantasies the fever-fires wrought.

"Alice!" he whispered, closing his weary eyes again.

Sister Annunciata was a nun, but she was primarily a woman. She wondered who "Alice" was; he had called her that so often, in his delirium.

Men, reduced by illness to the dependence of the littlest children, were always calling Sister Annunciata by some loved woman's name. Very often it was "Mother!" But as frequently it was the name of some one else whose tenderness had effaced all others in a man's memory. She often wondered about those women, and why the men who called them were so far away, alone. But no man who ever came under her ministry had invaded so much of her thought as Stephen. She knew what everybody in the region knew about young Mr. Bellas; but she knew, now, other things that she liked to think nobody else knew quite as she did. What other could know as she did the sweetness, the cleanliness, the little boyishness of him as he lay those three long weeks in her care, his consciousness stripped from him and the nakedness of his soul laid bare?

When he closed his eyes, she knelt for a moment beside his cot, and prayed; then rose and slipped silently away.

"Bellas has come-to, they tell me," Jed Harrod announced at his dinner table that day. "Poor devil! From now on's the toughest part—crazed with hunger all the time, and everybody in the world conspirin' to starve you. I wonder I didn't *kill* some one, when I was that way!"

"You nearly *did* kill *me*," Mrs. Harrod rejoined reprovingly. "We must get Mr. Bellas here as soon as he can be moved. It's too bad he had to wake up in that terrible hospital."

"The hospital ain't so terrible," Jed objected. "And it's the place he ought to be. You may be willin' to take the responsibility of bringin' him here in all this clackety-clack about mayonnaise and valenciennes, an' feedin' him on orange jelly served in rinds; but I tell you, *I'm not!* They

knew how to handle him, there, and what not to let him eat, and he's under no strain. You let him be!"

No demurrer was made to this, but the meal was finished in a constraint which did not aid digestion.

When Jed was gone, the three women—Rosamund was in Los Angeles—went upstairs to hold what he called a council of war.

Lucile began to cry.

"Don't, honey!" her mother pleaded.

"I can't help it," the girl sobbed. "Father is so—so kind of *coarse*! He talks as if we were trying to *abduct* Mr. Bellas, or—or something. He hurts my feelings so! Sometimes I feel as if I could—never—look at Mr. Bellas—again!"

"Oh, shoot!" cried Peaches. "Fathers always do that. Every girl I know says her father teases her so about her beau that she 'most wishes she was dead. They seem to find something awful funny about it. Don't you care! Fathers hardly ever help a girl when she needs it most. You just have to do the best you can in spite of them. Better be glad you've got such a jim-dandy Mummy, that knows how girls feel and is always johnny-on-the-spot to help them."

That cleared the atmosphere perceptibly, and the barometer rose.

Lucile dabbed her handkerchief at her nose.

"You're sweeties—both of you," she granted. "But I don't want even you to get to thinking of Mr. Bellas as my 'beau,' or even my special friend. It's very embarrassing for me. He has never showed any favour for me. I want to be kind to him—he's sick and alone—but I hope you don't think I want to throw myself at his head."

Mrs. Harrod looked appropriately horrified.

"I hope it could never be possible for anyone to think such a disgraceful thing!" she cried fervently. "Why should they?" she went on. "If you were plain or unattractive, they might; but every one knows you're the pret-

tiest girl anywhere around here, and that you're far too good an' lovely an' accomplished to have to court *anybody*!"

These maternal praises were not new to Lucile—she heard them forty times a day; so she passed over them as a matter of course, and proceeded to the real issue.

"I reckon I could be courted all right," she agreed, "if it wasn't for father. But he's really terrible. It'd be just like him to go to the hospital and persuade them not to let Mr. Bellas come here."

Mrs. Harrod thought on this possibility for a moment.

"No," she decided, aloud; "he wouldn't do that. Think how it would look! He bullies us, here at home; but he's got *some* pride: he wouldn't go an' do a thing like that. You move all your duds into Rosamund's room, an' we'll fix yours for him—like we said. Then we'll see!"

"I thought you were going to be good!"

Sister Annunciata spoke chidingly.

"I can't when I'm hungry. Nobody can!" For a week now, he had talked of little but food.

"The saints used to make themselves go hungry, so they could think more about their souls and God."

Her tone was demure; but her eyes, which she raised for a brief second, were dancing merrily.

Stephen made a gesture of impatience.

"Do you—" he began; then, recollecting, corrected himself; "does anybody believe in that sort of thing now?"

"Not, perhaps," she granted, "as Saint Jerome did—and other saints. But in the mortification of the flesh for the spirit's exaltation—yes!"

Stephen frowned.

"You want me to talk in your vernacular?" she asked, gently.

There was no rebuke in her tone, but he flushed, contritely.

"No," he said. "I beg your pardon. I don't think or

talk in your terms; but I understand them, of course. You are very kind to talk to me at all, and I appreciate it."

It hurt her to see him so humble.

"What shall I do," she besought him, "to help you forget that you are hungry and want to eat so much that you would get worse and, perhaps, die?"

"Tell me a story," he pleaded, eagerly. "No one has told me a story since Alice went away. I can't tell you what it means to me—being here! I feel like a little boy again; it is the helplessness, I suppose, and being waited on, and being told what I must and mustn't do, and all that. I—I think I like it very much—or would, if I could eat! When Alice was with me, if there was something I wanted to do and ought not to do, she could nearly always make me stop thinking about it by telling me a story."

"What did she tell you?"

"Oh, about wonderful places she'd been—in Italy and France and England—and about historic personages, like Joan of Arc and Cæsar, and Saint Louis, and Napoleon; or about pictures or sculpture or beautiful buildings. I can't remember any details—I don't suppose I understood more than a very little of all she said. But my mind holds haunting bits, a jumble of impressions; now and then when I see light refracted in colourful shafts, I seem to relate it, vaguely, to sun rays filtering through old glass precious as jewels, and falling aslant stone tombs with effigies of crusaders like Richard of the Lion Heart; when I hear you sisters singing your matins or vespers, I recall tales Alice used to tell of pilgrim choruses and the swell of great organs that made your heart beat till it almost burst; and so on. I was so little when I had her! But she could always make me sit enchanted while she told me things. Even if I couldn't understand them, I felt that they were big and splendid, and I loved the feeling I had in listening to them, and the help it was to me when I made up stories for myself."

"And you think I could tell you stories like those?"

"I know you could!"

"Well, then, I will do my best. I will try to tell you about Saint Francis of Assisi."

She sat primly down on the low, straight-backed chair without moving it from its austere placement against the farthest wall. And, holding her hands meekly, she began the tale of Francis' sinful youth and his illness and repentance.

Stephen listened patiently. He did indeed understand—in a way—the terms in which, when talking of spiritual subjects, she expressed herself; but for him they obscured the interest he might have felt in the same tale told differently.

Presently, however, Sister Annunciata—sitting over against the grey wall like a nun in a painting of an Italian Primitive—digressed a little, to describe Assisi, which she had visited. She spoke of the thrill when one first sees an Italian hill-town like Assisi; she was tempted to dwell, briefly, on the clash of arms in those twelfth-century days, and the nobles who strove one against another, and of the excesses of their worldliness; then she pictured the great church of Santa Maria degli Angeli built over the tiny church in which St. Francis preached; told about the thicket of roses in the cloister, into which the saint jumped, naked, to lacerate his flesh—and how the roses miraculously shed their thorns for his sweet sake, and have been thornless ever since, as she could testify, having seen them. He liked it when she narrated how St. Francis preached to the birds and beasts and fishes; and he loved it when she interpolated a description of that scene as painted by an earnest Italian of inland upbringing who depicted a gravely-listening lobster but painted him bright red.

"But," he entreated, laughing, "let us pass hastily by the boiled lobster. I must not think of him, or I shall remember that I'm hungry."

It was then that Sister Assumption entered and said Mrs. Harrod was calling on Mr. Bellas.

Stephen tried not to feel ungrateful for this kindness, but

his success was not eminent. He was able, however, to conceal from Mrs. Harrod the measure of his deficiency.

Mrs. Harrod was an inert sort of woman, and quiet in speech and manner; but she was not calm. Stephen had an uneasy feeling all the while she sat and talked, that at any moment she might suddenly straighten his bedspread or want to "plump" his pillows or do some other futilely kind or kindly futile thing. She didn't; she was reserving that. But she urged upon him that as soon as he could be moved, he must come to them and have good, home care.

"Oh, I couldn't think of letting you burden yourselves with a convalescent," he said, protestingly. "You are wonderfully kind—but I couldn't take advantage of it. Invalids must be very upsetting in a household. And you have no idea how beautifully they care for me here. I know it isn't much of a place, as hospitals go nowadays. But they are so kind! And I rest well, because I know I'm not disturbing anybody."

She was crestfallen. He seemed so emphatic in his determination. She could have cried, to think of Lucile's disappointment.

Stephen did not know why she felt so bad, but her chagrin was evident. He wanted to make some amends, but could not think what to do.

"I mustn't let myself get spoiled," he began, weakly. "Won't do for me, you know—I'm not used to it."

This heartened Mrs. Harrod more than he had dared to hope he could.

"I reckon you're not very easy spoiled," she said, smiling archly.

"Oh, indeed, you don't know me! I'm so unused to it that the least little drop of it goes to my head."

"You must be terrible lonely at the camp," she ventured, sympathetically.

Somehow it seemed ungallant to tell her that he wasn't; so he evaded the question.

"Well, you see I'm pretty busy—that helps—keeps me from knowing how lonely I am."

"Does it?" she murmured, vaguely. "Well, yes, I suppose it would. But I should think you'd get mighty lonesome here, with nothing to do."

"Somehow I *don't*," he answered, smiling. "I seem to doze and dream and wake and dream. And sometimes Sister Annunciata talks to me——"

"The old, withered one?"

"No, she isn't old or withered. She seems quite young and I should say she was beautiful. She is a very remarkable woman."

Mrs. Harrod had her opinion of nuns—it was based on a paper-bound narrative she had read, of one who "escaped."

"No wonder you like it here!" she said, trying to speak lightly. "Well, I must be going. If you should want anything, let us know—won't you?"

The "hurt" in her tone was scarcely veiled at all. Stephen was exceedingly sorry; but she seemed to refuse his efforts at reparation.

"You were so good to come," he assured her with such heartiness that she was almost mollified. "Mr. Harrod has been bully to me, too. I can never thank him enough."

On the way out, Mrs. Harrod sought Sister Annunciata. She *was* beautiful! Somewhere in her thirties, her delicate bloom unimpaired by her arduous work, her big, Madonna eyes the deepest sapphire blue, and her features chiselled as if for the enhancement her nun's head-dress lent them, she was, to Mrs. Harrod's mind, unaccountably present in this poor little 'dobe hospital on the border. Why should a beautiful woman of charm and culture evident even to Etta Harrod, be here nursing greasers and mining men and other flotsam of a frontier town?

Stephen Bellas' content with the hospital showed that he was under her spell. It was terrible!

"I have been trying," Mrs. Harrod said to Sister An-

nunciata, speaking with evident effort at repression, "to persuade Mr. Bellas to come to our home for his convalescence."

"And wouldn't he go?"

"No," firmly and resentfully; "he said he was very happy here—with you!"

She looked all the accusation she felt.

Sister Annunciata's face flushed—then paled till it looked like alabaster.

"Patients who have been very ill nearly always feel that way—for a little while—about their doctor and nurse and their surroundings," she vouchsafed, gently. "We sometimes have quite painful scenes when they have to leave the hospital—all hospitals have them. You see, illness makes them like children; they grow very dependent on those who are good to them——"

"Do they?" Etta Harrod broke in, eagerly.

"Very. That is why so many men fall in love with their nurses. Nurses understand. You would be surprised, I think, if you could know how often they refuse to take advantage of it."

Sister Annunciata would do penance, presently, for the deliberate sting in that speech; but Mrs. Harrod did not feel it, nor suspect its presence.

"Advantage?" she echoed, wonderingly.

Her antagonist smiled.

"It is so easy—isn't it?—for women to take advantage of men's weakness. So many women live that way! But, of course, there are many others whose self-respect does not permit it. And there are some whose respect for men does not permit it."

Mrs. Harrod's flaccid face was like a mask; Sister Annunciata could not tell whether there was or was not comprehension behind it.

"Oh, of course," she murmured, vaguely.

"I will talk to Mr. Bellas," Sister Annunciata said, "and see if I can't persuade him to accept your offer."

"Oh, *will* you?" Etta Harrod cried.

"But I don't want to go," Stephen protested. "I want to stay here."

Sister Annunciata was sitting primly—"Primitively"—in her little chair against the rough plastered grey wall. What refuge to her this nun-posture was, Stephen could not suspect; but his irritated pleas to her to change it had been ineffectual.

She raised a hand commandingly, to hush his protests.

"You have been very ill," she said in her most professional tone; "and people who have been very ill always feel like that."

"Like what?"

"Like staying in the hospital and with the nurse. It is one of the things we have to cure—like fever. You have been shut away here and nursed and kept quiet. Now your fever has run its course, and pretty soon you will go back to camp to go on with your work again. If you stay here until you have got back your physical strength, you will be very unhappy when you go back to Montezuma, because you will find that you have been too long out of contact with people. You know that you will have to learn to walk, when you get up; it will take you several days—you'll think you're never going to do it again as you used to. You'll have to learn many other things, too—things that we cannot teach you here, because we are so busy nursing the sick. I want you to go away—to go to the Harrods—to go as soon as you can—it will be best—for you."

She was not looking at him, but at things unseen. Her tone was almost liturgical, as if she were chanting a credo or a prayer.

"Oh, very well!" cried Stephen, crossly,
So he went.

CHAPTER VI

AFTER all, it wasn't so bad, at the Harrods'. Jed was home a good deal, and Stephen took long naps each morning and afternoon, and the house was kept very quiet for him, and nobody seemed over-disposed to peck at him with fluttering attentions.

When his nerves began to be a little like normal, readjusting themselves from that state to which invalidism reduces even modest and ordinarily considerate persons, he appreciated very humbly and heartily the unremitting pains they all took to make him comfortable. It seemed extraordinary to him that their kindness could go to such lengths for one who was, really, a stranger. He had been in their home a few times, but only as a wayfarer sitting constrainedly at their board set with the Sunday cloth and the household's full complement of cut glass. But if he had been a son, a favourite son, he could not have had more right of way in the house than was now his.

The young ladies he saw very little. Mrs. Harrod, setting his tray before him, would remark: "Lucile hoped you would enjoy this posy; it was sent to her. She always fixes your trays." Or, if he said how good something had tasted, "Lucile thought you would like it. She has such a knack for makin' things dainty an' appetizin'."

When waiting on him, Mrs. Harrod frequently wore an apron—a housewifely, serviceable big apron of white lawn gathered on a band.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed, delightedly, the first time he saw this. "I haven't seen a woman wear an apron in years and years—not since I was a boy. Oh, I suppose waitresses do—I never notice—but I don't mean that—I mean in a home. It looks so home-y. My young step-mother that

I loved so—the only mother I ever knew—used to wear them, often—frilly, pretty ones—I've always remembered them."

That day Lucile started to make herself two frilly, pretty aprons.

She really was not irked by following her mother's counsel to leave Stephen alone; her leisure was so pleasantly spent among the girl of her acquaintance, who knew that Mr. Stephen Bellas of Montezuma mine was a convalescent guest in her home. She did not tell the girls how infrequently she saw Mr. Bellas. She listened to their chatter and their questions, and let them interpret, as they chose, her reticence.

Lucile was canny. She would assume no attitude from which she might have to back down, to her chagrin and the secret satisfaction of the other girls.

After a week of resting in bed practically all the time except for an hour or so each day, while his bed was aired, Stephen began sitting up for several hours at a stretch. He slept less in the daytime, now, and was less weary and weak. Time hung a little heavy on his hands. Also, he began to wonder how things were going at the mine—he hadn't cared, before. He got letters from Blaikie and Lufkin and Thad. They all reported everything "ship-shape," and "A-I," and urged him to think of nothing but getting well.

The one thing needful, every one advised him, was to make a thorough job of convalescence—not to scamp it. And he was fairly reconciled to this, in his mind. He would "take it easy," and when he was able to travel he would go somewhere and recuperate "in great shape."

Thus resolved, he was ready to make the best and the most of his present situation. He wondered why the young ladies left him so almost severely alone. Perhaps it wasn't within the proprieties that they should come to his room, even with their mother or father. Perhaps they were too busy with their own affairs to bother with him. He did

not like to ask, for fear of seeming to request attention from them. But he was bored with his own company; and while he appreciated Jed's and Mrs. Harrod's, each for its own sort of kindness, neither of them was what could be called stimulating.

Mrs. Harrod was not a clever woman, but she had some instincts which served her almost as well as cleverness; she inclined, as naturally as a she-bear, to teach her offspring where and how to hunt sustenance. Something that was not of her brain, but the memory she inherited from her foremothers, told her when Stephen was ready to be interested.

Lucile, when the time came, hung back a little. She had been over-trained, over-rehearsed; her mind was a jumble of injunctions, plans, hopes, dreams; the chance of her lifetime was in her hands, now, and she was sick with fear of fumbling, and losing it.

"I don't know what to talk to him *about*," she said, anxiously.

"Talk to him about himself—get him to talk about himself," her mother counselled; "men always like that."

She had never learned the futility of generalisations.

Stephen did not care to talk about himself—not because he was more modest than other men, but because the keynote of his mentality was eagerness; he craved, from others, food for his dreams. His zest was to find life romantic, rich in those "high moments" that Blaikie talked about. What he had achieved interested him infinitely less than what he hoped to achieve. Perhaps if he had been more modest, he might have thought on what he had done as rather remarkable, all things considered; perhaps he would have felt better satisfied that he had got, if not all his deserts then at least part of them—whereas the truth about Stephen was that he felt he had not yet even begun to realise his expectations.

Lucile looked so pretty when she came shyly to the door

and asked if he wanted anything, that he might truthfully have answered he wanted to look at her. But he didn't.

"Oh, thank you!" he said. "You're ever so good. I'm so indebted to you all, now, that I don't like to go on running up the score—never *can* pay it, as it is! But if you hadn't anything better to do, and were to come and talk to me——!"

He smiled; and Stephen's smile was rarely winning.

"I have my sewing," she answered. "I could sew and talk too!"

She wore a dress of voile, of a grey-green colour that was peculiarly enhancing to her white skin and brilliant chestnut hair. The dress was over-trimmed and made in a way that is so well-described as "tack-y"; but Stephen's eye took in only the becomingness of the colour, and the housewifely air of the pretty, frilly apron. Presently, when she had sat down and settled herself to sew, he noted her beaded bronze-kid slippers—how small they were, and how high-heeled. He was not attracted by them, for some reason that he did not attempt to analyse. So he looked at Lucile's hair, instead; and, as she talked on to him about things that failed to engage his interest, he grew quite absorbed in watching her; in thinking what a pity it was her hands were so ugly, and recalling the pleasure that had been his, even in his weakness, in watching the way Sister Annunciata used her hands.

She was sewing lace on a chemise, whipping it to the edge of a ribbon beading that finished the neckline and arm-holes. The pale blue satin baby ribbon was already in the beading, and tied in a droopy bow in the centre-front.

Stephen watched her, fascinatedly. It was many long years since he had seen a woman sew like this.

"How many, many stitches!" he exclaimed. "Women's work always looks to me as if it took such a lot of patience."

"It does," Lucile assented, resignedly.

Stephen had often thought of a woman wearing a frilly

apron and "sewing something," as the central figure in all sweet domesticity. He was sure the young wife and mother in his *Graphic* picture, sewed frequently. But, somehow, as he watched Lucile, the thought he could not get away from was the *pettiness* of the things women did. He wondered if she spent much of her life doing things like this, and if she didn't hate it. Then he reflected that he did not know what it was she was sewing; perhaps it was a lot more important than it seemed.

"Looks like a baby's dress," he ventured, nodding toward it.

Lucile flushed.

"It—it's *mine*," she murmured confusedly.

"Oh," said Stephen, discreetly.

He was not uninterested in lingerie—if he were interested in a woman he would probably, he thought, care a good deal about all her little "pretties"; but inasmuch as all women, presumably, wore lingerie, he was not interested in it *per se*. In fact, it was vaguely but disagreeably related, in his mind, to the predatory woman and her lures.

Lucile's efforts to get him to talk about himself were unsuccessful. He recognised them at once, and was inclined to like her for their clumsiness. She was not flattering, but she evidently was trying to be kind.

"Oh, I'm not anything to talk about," he declared with the directness she found so disconcerting. "Let's talk about you! Tell me things about yourself."

"What kind of things?"

"Any kind! Tell me what you like to do, and what you *do* do. Tell me about parties, or *anything*. Think about the camp—a thousand miles from everywhere——"

"Do you get awfully lonely there?" she asked.

"No," he answered, "I can't say that I do. I'm so busy, you see. But although you may think Nogales isn't very gay, you'd call it a regular metropolis compared with the camp."

"Would I?"

"You sure would!"

"Don't any white women live there?"

"One does—the secretary's wife—but she'd rather be in Tophet, I'm sure."

"Why doesn't he move away, if she's so unhappy?"

"Well, now, I can't tell you that. Maybe because he doesn't know where he'd find another job so good."

"I don't see," Lucile objected, "what good a job is if it just helps you to live in a place you don't like."

"No," he said, candidly, "I don't, either. I think he likes it, all right! But, of course, he's only half of the family."

"Of course!" she echoed.

"That's why," he went on, "some men who like mining, and know it can't be done in cities, don't marry."

"Don't they?"

"No; they choose for themselves, but they don't have to choose how any one else shall live. And that's why some, who want to marry, marry natives."

"I don't see," she protested, "how any nice man can."

"Well," he agreed, "for that matter, neither do I."

Lucile was not sure whether this was encouraging, or the reverse.

"Do the—really nice ones ever do it?" she faltered.

"Depends," he answered, "on what you call 'nice.' One of my men—my superintendent—is going to, this fall."

"Is he—nice?"

Stephen laughed. "I'm not sure I know what you'd call him," he said. "He's a fine fellow, but he's—well, he's what you might call 'plain.'"

"Looking?"

"No—plain in his tastes. He isn't educated, except in a practical way and in a kind of rudimentary 'book-learnin'. He may never live in any other kind of a place than a mining camp. It may work out all right for him—that sort of marriage."

"But if he should strike it rich and want to get on in the world, he couldn't, with her?"

This was putting it, a little crudely, Stephen thought. Perhaps the crudeness was in Lucile's tone rather than in her words; perhaps it was in neither, but in the back of her mind; but he felt it.

"I wouldn't like to say that," he pleaded. "Women are so wonderfully adaptable. A man who was in camp last spring told me of being in London and seeing, many times, a brilliantly beautiful woman who somehow looked hauntingly familiar to him. She was a great social leader, and said to be a prime favorite with the King. The first night this man saw her she was in a box at the theatre, wearing a black evening gown, he said, and a string of the most fabulous pearls he had ever seen. Then, another night, he was introduced to her at a big reception. She had on another fortune in gems—superb, he said, but in the most perfect taste. He told her he had a vague memory of having met her before, but was probably mistaken. 'No,' she said, 'I think I remember *you*! Were you ever in Cripple Creek?' He said he had been. 'That's where we met, then,' she went on; 'probably before my husband made his great strike. We lived in a little shack there for three years, and I did my own washing and sometimes I did other peoples', too.' He said he thought that woman was the greatest marvel he had seen in Europe."

"Why?" queried Lucile, intensely interested.

Stephen looked at her, wonderingly—but did not know how to answer.

"She must," Lucile opined, as if not noticing his omission to answer, "have been a lady all the time—from the first, I mean."

"Yes," he agreed, gravely, "she must have been."

"Didn't you ever," she pursued, "know any mining man who was married to a—*to a lady*—that could, you know, be a great credit to him, when he—if he got very, very rich?"

"I've never," he admitted, "thought of any I have known,

"You sure would!"

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"Didn't you ever," she pursued, "know any mining man who was married to a—to a lady—that could, you know, be a great credit to him, when he—if he got very, very rich?"

"I've never," he admitted, "thought of any I have known,

in that way. But in the nearest camp to ours, a much smaller camp with fewer comforts, there is a perfectly splendid little woman who would be a great credit and a great happiness to her husband, I should think, in any circumstances."

"Is she—married?"

"Oh, yes. She and her husband were playmates and school-fellows and college classmates—and now they're 'pardners.'"

"Does she like it, there?"

"She likes any place where he is—and no place where he isn't."

"Oh, of course; but I mean——"

"Does she wish he were somewhere else? I don't know. She loves books and pictures and music and plays and many things she is deprived of. But she loves the hills and the sky and the stars and the desert flowers, and the strange wild things, and the Indians, and horses and dogs, and—and Frank Cunningham! She always seems overflowing with delight in what she has."

"I see."

Stephen wanted to say, "I don't believe you do." But he didn't.

On the whole, he greatly preferred the conversations he had with Peaches. She talked so frankly about nothing, and Lucile made such elaborate efforts to the same end. But Peaches fell to his lot far seldomer than Lucile.

He came down-stairs to his dinners and suppers, now; and spent hours of each day in the garden or on the porch. Lucile was often with him. His entreaties to her to talk to him met with scant response; but she seemed to like hearing him talk—and Stephen felt that there was little enough he could do to repay the bounteous kindness of this household; so he talked to Lucile as entertainingly as he could.

It never occurred to him that she was pursuing him. It never could have occurred to him. He had a number of old-fashioned ideas, partly inherited, partly imbibed in

his infant years, partly acquired in the kind of reading he did; and one of these was that no "nice" girl ever thought about a man as a possible husband until that man had persuaded her to do so. There were, of course, women who sought men's favour—women like Jessamine, and that sort; the women who prey. And there were "nice" girls who were coquettish, and played for admiration; Stephen didn't care about this kind of girl, but he was willing to believe that she was good, though vain and frivolous. Lucile did not impress him as coquettish. He was sure her kindness to him was pure benevolence.

As for Jed, he was soothed into unsuspectingness through hearing no reference to anything that savoured of hope to ensnare Stephen.

Whatever was said, was said in close council of the females only, and usually when Peaches was otherwise engaged.

"He is certainly a shy sort of man," Mrs. Harrod declared. "But they make the best husbands."

Lucile bit her lip to keep from crying, and made no answer.

"Don't he ever say *anythin'*, honey," her mother went on, tenderly, "that—that shows he's interested?"

Lucile shook her head.

"He's the kind of man that has high ideals of women; you can't help seein' that," Mrs. Harrod purred on. "A man like that always feels like he ain't *worthy* of a beautiful, pure, lovely girl. It takes a fellow like Roy Dixon to ask a girl to marry him an' offer her a sober, industrious an' frugal father for her support. Don't you feel bad, honey, if Mr. Bellas seems to hold back. He has probably set you 'way up on a pedestal, an' is worshippin' you from afar. An' besides that, he sees you here in your home surrounded by all of us who love you, an' among your friends, an' he more than likely thinks what has he got to offer you if you give all this up for him. He's just the kind of

man that could worship an' adore you, an' never ask you to marry him and go to Montezuma camp."

"He says it's awful dull, there," Lucile interposed.

"Well! What of it? You wouldn't stay there all the time! You'd go on lovely trips with him when he goes East, and to California. And you'd have the girls an' me down there to visit. And you'd come home here, when you wanted to. And it won't be but a little while, anyway, till he gets so he can hire people to run the mines, and you can have your fine home in Los Angeles—or maybe New York."

"Or London," Lucile added, hopeful again. "He told me about a Cripple Creek man who went to London, and his wife wore fabulous pearls and was a favourite of the King."

Mrs. Harrod looked admiringly at her daughter.

"I reckon she didn't become 'em a bit better'n *you* would!" she averred. "And I s'pose that's what he was tryin' to tell you—but you wouldn't understand. My land! maybe the poor man has tried every way he can think of to let you know—an' because he didn't just say 'I love you—will you be mine?', you let him go on tryin'. I don't suppose there would have been a marriage since the Garden of Eden, if women were all like that. You always have to help them a little, dear—if it's only just bein' quick to understand what they're tryin' to say."

This council was interrupted by Jed, who announced:

"Bellas tells me he's goin' to pull out, next week—thinks he'll go to the Coast—Catalina or Santa Barbara, or some such place, for a while—fish and do things like that. He sure is grateful for all you've done for him!"

"Well," Mrs. Harrod admitted, "I don't mind saying he has a right to be."

"Shucks!" said Jed. "I reckon we enjoyed doin' it, or we wouldn't have done it."

Mrs. Harrod smiled ungenially. "As your share in the doin' consisted mos'ly of *talk*," she retorted, "I reckon you *did* enjoy it."

Jed whistled, to avoid cursing, and went down town.

If he could have spent the evening talking with Stephen, alone, he would have stayed home. But he knew better than to expect that.

A late summer warmth lingered, although October was nigh spent. The dark fell early, these days, and the sudden dawn came late—if Stephen were at the mine he would see it come shooting up from behind the eastern hill ranges as he strode about on the dump. As he returned to his former health, he returned also to former habits, and found himself waking at five, and growing drowsy soon after the stars came out.

He offered to help clear away the supper dishes, but was smilingly refused. So he and Peaches went out on the porch, where they chaffed pleasantly until Roy Dixon came and persuaded her to go for a walk. After they had strolled down the path and out of sight, and their laughing voices were lost in the distance, Stephen sat dreamily content and thought of the delicious sloth he meant to invite at Catalina.

He was a little sorry when Lucile came out and joined him—but only a little, because he was going away so soon, and she had been very kind.

"Father says you're talkin' about leavin' us," she said, trying to speak not too regretfully.

"Yes—I think I'll be able to go next week."

No answer. Lucile was sitting on the top step, her knees encircled by her arms.

Stephen could barely see her, from where he sat in a big rocking chair, back in the shadow of the vines.

"You certainly have been good to me," he went on, warmly. "I don't know how to thank you—I never can."

"Don't try," she said, speaking a little thickly. "It has been a pleasure to us, I assure you."

"I can believe that," he replied; "you all are so good and kind—you make a fellow believe you do it from love of it, and not just because it's a duty. That's the thing I've felt

in all you've done that has—has made it so beautiful. There's a kind of cold kindness that some people give you because they feel they ought to. Yours has been so different! I shall always remember it. It is the first taste of home I've had since I was a wee little chap—only six years, I was, when the crash came in my life."

His tone was more confidential than Lucile had ever before heard it.

"I am so glad," she murmured, "that we were where we could share our home with you."

She wanted to get up and sit nearer to him, on one of the porch chairs, but she was afraid she might, in moving, break his mood.

"I've been wondering," he went on, "what I could ever do—do you care at all for outdoor life, for roughing it? Do you like to ride? Could you put up with rude accommodations, for a little while? I really manage pretty good fare down there, now—keep a cow and chickens, and get in lots of fresh stuff—don't have to live out of cans as we used to—and I have a good old Chink cook—it wouldn't be half bad—evenings about the big, roaring fires are right jolly, sometimes—if you think you could manage——"

He was a little alarmed at himself, now that he had suggested it. Suppose Mrs. Harrod and her three daughters should come, for a week or so, however would he stow them comfortably away? If he asked some young fellows, to make things gay for them, he could take care of them, all right, in the bunkhouse; fellows who camped you could always take care of. But ladies! He really ought to have gone a bit slower about proposing such a thing.

All this flashed into his mind while Lucile was getting up from her step. He thought she was embarrassed to know how to decline. Instead, she came close, threw her arms about him, and murmured:

"I could manage to be happy anywhere you are, dear."

Before Stephen could think what to say or do, she had run into the house.

He was still sitting there, a bewildered man, when Mrs. Harrod came out, melting with emotion.

"My dear boy," she cried, bending over him to kiss his forehead. "You have won a treasure—the loveliest girl in the world. I congratulate you with all my heart."

"Mrs. Harrod," he stammered, "you don't understand——"

"Oh, yes I do!" she cried, archly. "I understand perfectly. I've seen it coming—I was prepared for it. It is my dearest, dearest treasure that you're askin' for. But I want her to be happy. And after what I've seen of you in these past weeks, I know you'll be mighty good to her."

Stephen wanted to laugh; he wanted to cry; he wanted to swear. He did none of these things. Instead, he said weakly, in a voice that sounded to him like the one where-with he had first complained to Sister Annunciata of being hungry:

"Where is—Lucile? I must see her."

Her mother laughed.

"She's so excited, dear child, that when she knew I was comin' out to see you, she run right off to tell the wonderful news to some of her girl chums. She'll be back presently. But you know how girls are—and this is the greatest thing that ever happens to 'em."

CHAPTER VII

WELL, I want to know if it's all straight and above board—that's all," Jed Harrod insisted. "If he wants her, and she wants him, I'm satisfied—Lord knows. But I want to be sure that no man has had advantage taken of him when he was a guest in my house—that's all!"

Mrs. Harrod gave her husband a look that might have withered him had he not been so thoroughly withered years ago.

"Do you suppose for one moment," she demanded, "that my daughter would take advantage of a man, or wish to marry any one who wasn't in love with her?"

"I'm not at all sure about it," he answered, doggedly.

"I ought to be surprised," his better half retorted scathingly; "but I'm not! What other point of view could any one expect from a man who spends his leisure in saloons, among women who—who *do* take advantage of men?"

Jed was not interested in defending himself; he had tired of that long ago—about the time he became permanently withered. But he was determined to know about Stephen.

"Never mind about me," he muttered; "Bellas'll tell me what the truth of it all is."

Mrs. Harrod was sitting up in bed. She was not a very dignified sight. Her front hair was done up on kid curlers; her long, thin braid "roughed" at the end, hung skimpily down her broad back; her nightdress was an old one of outing flannel worn thin.

"You certainly can't intend," she gasped, hysterically, "to ask Mr. Bellas if—if Lucile—took advantage of him?"

Jed jerked his collar off and flung it wrathfully just where he had been told one thousand times not to fling it—on the bureau, supposed to be sacred to Etta's belongings. He had a chiffonier of his own—in the bathroom.

"I'll ask him if he's sure he wants her—it's my *duty* to!"

"It's no such thing—your duty!" Etta cried. "It's your duty to know if he can support her, and if he's a decent chap. The rest is *her* business! And I can tell you, Jed Harrod, that if you insist on humiliatin' your daughter and makin' her lover mistrust her, you're a meaner hound than ever walked in shoe leather before. It's mighty little you've ever done for those girls, to put them where they belong. An' now, when one of them has a beautiful thing happen to her, you can't be satisfied till you've tried to spoil it."

She began to cry.

Jed was a slave to tears.

"How you go on!" he declared, but in a soothing voice. "If everything's all right, what harm can I do—*whatever* I say to Bellas?"

Etta's listening ear—the one not muffled in her pillow—caught the conciliatory tone in his voice.

She sat up, and dried her tears—with the sleeve of her shabby nightgown.

"Come over here, Papa," she entreated; "come over here and tell me you're sorry you hurt me so. As if it wasn't hard enough for a mother to give her daughter up, without havin' to stand anythin' like this from the one who should be her consoler!"

He sat down on the edge of their bed, beside her. He wanted to be kind; but women were so queer! Why did Etta try to wring sympathy from him on the score of having to give up her girl? For what else had she lived and laboured, these years past, but to get some one to give Lucile to? If she wanted to pose as a bereft and disconsolate mother, why in the name of goodness did she select him for audience? Jed thought that if only he could understand things like this about Etta, he could get on with her so much better.

"I never mean to hurt you, Mamma," he began, weakly, "you know that! I want Lucile to be happy! And I think Bellas is the finest man I ever knew. But he told me, once—

just the very night he was taken sick—what his ideal was, in a wife—and it—it didn't sound like Lucile——”

Etta laughed.

“You poor old doddeky!” she cried, gaily. “How little men ever learn! Why, I suppose every man has a lot of notions of what the girl'll have to be like that he falls in love with—and then finds himself crazy about some girl that isn't *one* of those things. Ask the men you know if that isn't true. Dear knows what Mr. Bellas had in his mind a while back. But he's been here three weeks, an' seen Lucile in her home, an' learned how sweet she is, an' good an' capable. An' when he got to thinkin' about goin' back there an' leavin' her, he just couldn't—that's all! He told her all about just what she'd have to put up with, but he said he believed he could make her comf'table. An' she told him she could be happy anywhere he was. I believe that if anythin' happened to spoil this, Lucile'd *die!*”

Jed tried to think—to think hard. . . . Oh, well! perhaps Bellas *had* fallen in love with Lucile. It was the sort of thing that often happened. . . . Lucile was certainly pretty, and good. Jed tried to recall a girl he's ever seen who was more attractive—and he couldn't. . . . He had heard of Lufkin's engagement to Esperanza. Bellas was mighty lucky to have escaped that sort of thing. And if a girl like Lucile was willing to live in a mining camp—well, she must like him pretty well. . . . Maybe it would be all right.

“Was that how he popped the question?” he asked, grinning; Jed was a good gossip, and relished details.

“Yes; she said he spoke as if he almost thought it was cheeky of him to ask.”

“It's funny,” Jed mused, “how girls can get men feelin' that way—men like Bellas, too, that you'd think would know how crazy girls are to get them.”

“A nice man,” Etta declared, “realises how much he's askin' of a girl, an' how much she's givin' him—leavin' her home and fam'ly and everythin', to go with him and make

him happy. I should think it *would* make a man feel humble."

"Skeery business for a man, too!" Jed averred. "Lord! I wonder any of 'em ever raise the nerve to do it—puts his neck clean in her noose—a man does—and after that it's pretty much up to her what gait he travels at and where he stops for grass and drink."

Etta disagreed with this idea, but she didn't care to argue it just now.

"And yet," she clinched, "you want to go and make it harder for him by raisin' doubts in his mind."

"I just want to know it's all right," he murmured; he was getting sleepy.

"I should think when I tell you it's all right, that'd be enough!" Etta said, plaintively.

But what Jed thought of saying, he didn't say—it would prolong the discussion too indefinitely.

Stephen's first thought, when he realised what had happened, was that he ought to do something about it right away. But, not to save him could he think what to do. That Lucile had not really misunderstood him, did not occur to his mind; he charged her, mentally, with nothing worse than a celerity, an eagerness, opposed to all his notions of the way a girl had to be wooed. He blamed himself for the blunder. But, of course, it was quite too terrible to think that the consequences would be enduring. When he thought he must evade them from the very outset, because it was his nature so to loathe pretence and misrepresentation, he reflected that he must not act on his own preferences alone. He had stupidly misled a sensitive young girl, one who had been very kind to him, the daughter of people who had treated him like a son. The meanest cad alive would not deal them a humiliating hurt, no matter what he suffered pending the adjustment of this tangle.

No! he must not think of himself, for a while; he must

go through with the thing, somehow, until it dawned on Lucile—as it surely must—that to marry him would be a mistake for her. The release must come not on his request, but on hers. On no account must a young girl's dignity be impaired in her own eyes or in the eyes of her community, because she had been too impetuous. If any one were to be, or to seem, flouted it must be he.

Many men—perhaps most men—would have laughed or scoffed at his shrinking from physical contact with a woman he did not love. But Stephen was an idealist. He was perfectly aware how other men feel about such things; but that was their affair, not his. His mind was set steadfastly upon the kind of emotional experience he desired; just as—when he was a struggling, dreaming, over-working lad—it was set on mining in a particular part of Mexico; he was not tempted from his dream of invasion and conquest, by any wayside lures, any crossroads, nor deterred from following after it by any perils or improbabilities of success; his attitude toward the other vision was no less simple and no less ardent. He believed that some day he should meet and love a woman in loving whom he should be transfigured, glorified. His faith in this kept him in a glow, a glamour, of life's romance as an escape from its everydayness, greater than the men he knew got from their philanthropy. It was an intense disappointment to him to have to give Lucile even the form, the semblance, of that which he had kept so sacred to his ideal. But he gave it.

He felt sure that Lucile's intuition would tell her this was no lover's kiss. He had for her, in fact, something close akin to physical repulsion. Surely she would feel it, and tell him she knew he had made a mistake.

But she didn't. Whereupon he made himself reflect on the many reasons, all to her sweet credit, why she should not know how little she was getting.

He was alarmed when he learned Lucile's determination to have an early wedding.

"I can't take you to camp until I've built a house for you,"

he urged. "That will be several months a-building. And it must be furnished suitably. You've no idea how crude everything is! It will be next June, I should think, before I can be ready——"

"Oh, Stephen!" she pleaded. "Let me come now—please! I can't bear it to have you go off there alone with no one to take care of you. I shall be miserable, here, worrying about you. And I'd love to see my house bein' built. It will be such fun! I don't mind a few hardships for a little while. Please!"

"Well," he temporised, "let's not talk about definite plans until I get back from Los Angeles where I can see——"

"Oh! Are you going there *anyway*?"

"Anyway?" he echoed, blankly.

"I thought of *course* you wouldn't care to go *now*!"

"My dear girl, I've got to go—got to see my lawyer, and do a lot of most important things."

"If—if you wanted me to—very much," she murmured, shyly, "I could go with you—I could get my things there—they'd be nicer, anyway."

"You're awfully good," he protested; "but I really couldn't think of it—of letting you, I mean. You'd get in an awful flurry—and I would, too—and I'm not strong yet, you know—and the excitement might set me back again—and I'd be on your hands—and it'd be no kind of a—of a—honeymoon at all."

Lucile wept a very little, softly. She was not sure how tears would affect him.

They made him, it quickly appeared, quite miserable but no whit less resolute.

Reflecting, then, that her ring and dear knows what other lovely presents would undoubtedly come from Los Angeles, Lucile smiled a quite radiant April smile.

So, the flurry of congratulations and felicitations over, Stephen departed to the coast and Lucile plunged into plans involving featherstitching and initialing and beading and inserting galore.

"I wouldn't get me many sets, or dresses, if I was you," her mother counselled. "Get a few and have them fine. You'll want new ones before long, and you can buy the best. Maybe you'll go to New York on your weddin' trip and see things there you'll want to buy."

Letters to Rosamund, about to return, were filled with orders for samples of valenciennes and cluny and chiffon and white satin or crepe meteor, etc. And the household plunged into a maelstrom of preparations.

Stephen's counsel in Los Angeles was not only a distinguished member of the bar, but he had served in the diplomatic corps and in international committees adjusting important affairs. He was an urbane, handsome man, past sixty, faultlessly groomed and elegantly tailored. His hair was snow white, his complexion had the pink freshness as of a frosty morning, and his blue eyes were as bright as stars on a clear winter night. Stephen consulted the Honourable Storrs Blackburn infrequently and on major affairs only; but the relation between them was cordial in the extreme and full of mutual confidence.

It was after a dinner *intime* at Blackburn's club, that Stephen brought the conversation around to the subject of his engagement.

He was not adroit about it.

"Blackburn," he began, abruptly, "I'm in a lot of trouble—personal trouble. It isn't anything the law can help, but I want your advice—as man to man. You've seen a lot of the world, and I've seen very little; tell me what you think I ought to do. I'm engaged to a girl and I don't want to marry her."

"Breach of promise?"

Stephen frowned.

"Nothing of that sort," he answered quickly. "She's a nice girl—a very nice girl. But there's a misunderstanding. She thought I was proposing to her when I wasn't at all—I'm such a blundering fool!—and accepted me before I could realise what was happening. She was so sweet about

it, and seemed so happy, I didn't know how to tell her it was all a mistake—and in a minute she had run off to tell her mother and some of her girl friends all about it——”

Blackburn lifted his delicately pencilled white eyebrows meaningfully; then, with an adept and aristocratic motion flicked the ash of his cigarette into the saucer of his after dinner coffee cup.

“You’ve got a lot of money, Bellas,” he remarked, dryly.

Stephen was irritated.

“Good heavens, Blackburn,” he insisted resentfully, “can’t I make you understand it isn’t that sort of thing at all? I’m not all kinds of a fool! I know the sort of woman who’s after money. And I know how to keep away from them. They can’t tempt me, and they can’t blackmail me. There’s nothing in me or in my life that they can touch—thank God! If this were not true I’d rather be a pauper—I’ve seen them get so many fellows. This is altogether different. This young lady is the daughter of a good family, people who’ve been so kind to me that I’ll never be able to thank them enough. Took me out of the hospital into their own home, and nursed me like a petted son. The daughters are pretty and attractive as they can be—fond of society and popular, and all that. I don’t think Miss Lucile—the one I’m engaged to—wants to live in a mining-camp, at all; she just hasn’t given the prospects good, serious thought. She’s romantic, and I suppose my being an invalid there in her home kind of worked on her imagination. And then she’s like all girls, her head’s full of weddings and frills and that sort of thing. She’d be bored to death inside of three months, at Montezuma—and with me! But she is so eager to get married, I’m afraid she won’t stop to think until there’s no use thinking.”

Blackburn listened attentively.

“How do you feel about *her*?” he questioned, when Stephen gave him an opportunity.

Stephen was embarrassed. His sense of the nice proprieties was violated by even the thought of expressing distaste

for a young lady he had just said was bent on marrying him. But how could Blackburn counsel him if he were unwilling to state his case?

"I—well, I think she's a very nice girl," he began.

"That'll do," his attorney interrupted, laughing.

"No, it won't," Stephen objected. "I don't want any conclusions you have jumped at. Here's a girl who is pretty, and good and sweet, and domestic, and affectionate, and will almost certainly make a fine wife and mother—but I don't want her. I haven't an objection to urge against her—but I don't want her. Probably most people would think she is far too good for me; I'm sure she is—but I don't want her. When I think that I may have to marry her, I want to ride over the edge of the world and never come back any more. Am I crazy to take it so hard?"

"Wait a minute!" Blackburn urged. "Before I answer that question, let me ask you some others. How long has this been going on?"

"Three weeks or thereabouts."

"You've been here that long."

"Not quite; and it happened only two or three days before I left Nogales."

"What have you done about it since you came away?"

"Well, for one thing, I've written very unimpassioned letters—couldn't write any other kind, to save me. I thought perhaps she'd feel something lacking in these—and hesitate."

"Doesn't she?"

"I can't discern it, if she does. I address her as 'My dear Lucile'—seemed as if anything more formal than that would be insulting—and write briefly—I have to, because I can't think of anything to say except about the climate and my health—and I sign myself 'Sincerely yours, Stephen Bellas'—swearing softly to myself because there's nothing sincere about it and I loathe hypocrisy. But she—she begins her answers, 'Precious Honey Boy,' and—things like that; and fills them full of——"

He stopped. His face was scarlet with the shame he felt for this thing he was doing.

"Blackburn," he resumed, "I feel like the darndest cad that ever breathed. That's the awful part of this business—I can't have any self-respect any way it goes. I've never talked to you about myself before. But you're a keen man—perhaps you've sensed my sort, and know what a lot it means to a fellow like me to be able to think respectfully of himself. I've got to do it! When I can't do it any more, I want to die. I want to die *before* that time comes. It isn't that I think much of what I've done—most that I care about I have yet to do—but I must be able to feel that at least I tried to live according to my code or my ideals. That's the reason I can't hurt that girl to save myself."

Blackburn said nothing for several minutes, but sat staring abstractedly at his dessert-plate with its fragment of Camembert and broken water-biscuit. One shapely hand grasped his chin in a hard-thinking pose.

"You are convinced," he asked, at length, "that she is genuinely fond of you?"

"No," Stephen hastened to say; "only that she is sincere in *thinking* that she is fond of me. I honestly am dreading her certain unhappiness as well as of my own, if we marry."

"Have you—broached this to her?"

"Yes."

"And she replied—?"

"That she didn't see how I could doubt her love, and what did I want her to do to prove it, and so on—she wrote quite wildly. It made me feel like the devil."

"Bellas," the elder man said in a tone as of sudden conviction, "there's just this about it: either that girl's dead in love with you, or she isn't; the only way you'll ever get to know will be by marrying her—and *then* you may not be able to find out! I've known a number of men who said they never knew what their wives thought of them—men who had plenty of money. If you could become sud-

denly penniless, you'd know. Or if you could be reputed penniless——"

Stephen interrupted with a gesture of distaste.

"Theatrics," he exclaimed, "and penny-a-line stuff! There's enough that's indirect and misleading in this mess already, without my adding anything like that to it."

"Well, then, why don't you just go through with the thing? I can't see that you stand a chance of anything but your self-respect—but that's the essential to you, after all. Do whatever seems to you to be the kind, considerate, honourable, gentlemanly thing. You'll hate yourself if you do less. And the outcome will probably be as good as the average, or even better. You're losing out on the glamour that some men get for a brief while—the glow they live in while they're courting—but you won't have any disillusionment to fight through. You start in about where the average man finds himself a year or so after marriage. You're a man of affairs; you've got big things to do; you haven't much time for romancing. The girl'll make out all right if you give her plenty of money and a loose rein. She may make you quite contented. Don't make so much of the matter. Marriage is only a phase of a man's life, and those who are comfortable in it have made themselves adaptable. Don't nurse the notion that other men are getting a whole lot more than you. They aren't! You make your own world in the big important issues that you care a lot about. In the little world of what you shall eat for breakfast and what colour your bedroom curtains shall be, she makes it for you. But, Lord, man! what's that to a fellow with all you've got before you?"

Stephen made one more effort. He wrote to Lucile and pleaded for a stay—until June.

Two days later Mrs. Harrod telegraphed him that Lucile was ill, and begged him to come at once.

"She has cried herself sick," the anxious mother told

him when he reached Nogales, "over the postponement—they're so unlucky, you know!—and for fear you doubt her love, and all that."

So Stephen "went through" with it.

CHAPTER VIII

THE wedding was the ninth of December. All the details connected with it were allied, in Stephen's mind, with the myriad phantasms which pressed upon him in the days of his delirium.

He was horrified when he realised that it was to be a church wedding, one of those tawdry pageants he had so intensely loathed since his first sight of one.

But Lucile could not conceive of marriage without bridesmaids, tulle, satin, ushers, ribbon-stretchers, ring-bearer, maid of honour, palms, lilies, bouquets, two kinds of wedding-cake, and ice cream. There would, however, be something "more original" than chicken salad.

"I can't see why you don't like church weddin's," she said plaintively to Stephen. "I think they're perfectly beautiful. And I've always dreamed of mine. I couldn't bear not to have my dreams come true. Why! since I was a teensy little bit of a girl I've planned my dress and my bridesmaids' dresses, and the decorations, and everything. I couldn't tell you how many long, dull sermons I've sat through thinkin' out the colour scheme for my bridesmaids, and how I'd have the palms arranged. I could just sit there and *see* it all—all but you! I'm goin' to have a rainbow effect: one maid in pale yellow, one in lavender, one in nile green, one in rose pink, one in baby blue, and one in very pale pink. Then Rosamund will wear one of those rainbow shaded silks—you know—that begin deep and grow pale—Oh! they're lovely. And instead of bouquets, the girls will carry Bo-peep crooks, white with long ribbon streamers. I've thought out so many novel features!"

Stephen didn't say that this seemed to him more like a circus than like what a wedding should be. He was sur-

rounded by persons all of whom—except Jed, who did not count—were unswervingly committed to this as the proper sort of ceremony; and he was of no mind to lead an opposition against such overwhelming force and numbers. Besides, he reminded himself that Lucile undeniably had a right to her kind of a wedding; and that no bridegroom, anyway, was other than an adjunct required by custom for such festivities.

Men had got married this way for a long time—great numbers of them—in a cloud of tulle and featherstitching and valenciennes and like things; and many of them seemed to live through the ordeal and through others that followed. Some of them appeared contented, well adjusted to the new order of life. Doubtless he could manage as well as the average.

It was hard to think of himself as making out no better than the average—he who had aspired so high!—but he was determined to give no hospitality to self-pity. The romance of life for him should be in the development of those mines—in his work. After all, that was probably where most men found romance who found it anywhere.

Rosamund was the maid of honour—Rosamund who in Los Angeles had achieved nothing more than a passion for urban life, and the lace for Lucile's lingerie; yet who felt no pang of envy over Lucile's "match."

"If you like Stephen, *I'm* satisfied," she said with sisterly candour. "But when my man comes, I hope he'll be more—exciting. Stephen's slower than molasses in January. And I'll bet the Sahara's festive compared with Montezuma camp."

To Peaches, she confided what she did not dare to say to Lucile.

"He's not in love—not a little bit! Doesn't she see it, or doesn't she care?"

Peaches shrugged expressively. "Don't ask me!" she cried. "But I'll bet he isn't as slow as you think he is—he

just hasn't started, that's all! I wouldn't want him for a lover unless he wanted me more than he does Lucile. But he's a jim-dandy man, all right, when you're not trying to marry him. Wait till you know him better."

"I'm waiting!" declared Rosamund, flippantly. "I wish he'd bring a lot of ushers here, instead of having these town fellows I'm so tired of."

"You have Mr. Stillwell for your man," Peaches reminded her.

Rosamund made a wry face.

"He lives in the Sahara, too!" she said. "But he's pretty good fun."

It was Thad, however, who wrought worse havoc with Lucile's careful plans than all other participants combined. He came to town three days before the wedding and at once began, in his engaging way, to make himself a social factor of the first importance, and a general "handy Andy," as he expressed it, for the unwrapping of wedding presents and similar jobs.

His bubbling good humour sufficed not only for himself but to keep every one about him in gay spirits notwithstanding the multitude of irritations attendant on such a flurry.

A fragile gift arrived by express was found, when unpacked, shattered beyond hope of repair. "And it's the prettiest thing I've received!" Lucile wailed. "Why do things like that never happen to these horrid duplicates?"

The bride's going-away gown, ordered in Los Angeles, did not come until the day before the wedding, and then was pronounced "a fright" and not at all what had been expected.

One of the bridesmaids had a sty on her eye, and another bridesmaid might not be able to attend because her father inconsiderately chose this time to be critically ill.

The Bo-peep crooks were much shorter than Lucile had ordered, and looked like canes.

The yellow chiffon Nadine Davis got for her gown was

"the awfulest pumpkin colour," and threatened the delicacy of the rainbow.

Jed Harrod would not buy, rent, or borrow a "dress suit," and the bride would have to be "given away" by a parent in a flopping "Prince Albert" that had served Jed on Sundays since about the time the Confederacy became a Lost Cause.

The bridal slippers pinched, and there was no time to send them away and get another pair.

The dark fruit cake—the "groom's cake"—which Mrs. Harrod baked after her own cherished recipe, "fell" and when iced looked—as Peaches said—as if the groom had sat on it.

The church roof leaked, and a rain two nights before the wedding washed down a considerable area of calsomine.

Lucile's plan to serve sweetbread patties did not flaunt its impracticability until the last minute, and a salad had to be substituted. It was, however, not chicken salad.

These were just a few of the tragedies of the two days when Thad was helping. Lucile took all of them very hard. Mrs. Harrod was so nervous that each thing which went amiss seemed to threaten her complete collapse. But Thad kept Rosamund and Peaches laughing, and jollied their mother out of each torment, and even got Jed to see how funny some things were. Lucile was so much "on edge" that no one tried to do anything except keep out of her way. Stephen really did have a good many things to attend to, and his absence from the fray was not commented on. He knew that Thad was making himself a most effective "best man," and really working for the pearl scarf pin he was about to receive.

But alas! after the supper to the bridal party, at the Harrod home, and the rehearsal of the wedding processional and recessional; at the church, there was a comparatively early breaking-up so that every one might get some "beauty sleep."

Thad was tired, but not sleepy. When he got to the hotel

he was, somehow, in just the mood to stroll a bit further, and cross the street, and see how things were going in that part of town where there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage.

His intentions were excellent. He meant to "have a look," "say howdy" here and there, and "turn in."

It was past one o'clock when Stephen got to the hotel room he shared with Thad; he looked very tired; he had been walking for three hours; his shoes were mired, for he had been far enough beyond the town to encounter the mud of country roads. No; he wasn't running away—like Abraham Lincoln on his wedding eve—but trying to get far enough from the turmoil to find a perspective on it, to bring himself in hand for the next twenty-four hours. After that, he hoped, it would be easier. It was this unaccustomed atmosphere of multitudinous and futile detail that smothered him. When he was back in his own simple routine, again, he would manage, somehow.

Thad's unoccupied bed startled him. With a sick feeling he went downstairs and out into the street. Thad was not to be found, but many persons reported having seen him very drunk and obstreperous; he had been thrown out of Ed Walsh's place; no one had seen him after that.

Stephen inquired, then, for Pearl Dorking and was directed to her lodging, a mean little room over an empty store.

"Sure, I've got him!" she replied to Stephen's question. "Who else'd have him, in the state he's in, except me or the calaboose? Come in and look at him."

Thad was a revolting sight, so beastly drunk, so disheveled and defiled as to nauseate even Pearl, who wept over him in a half-maudlin way while she tried to clean him up.

"Did you get him drunk, Pearl?" Stephen asked; there was no censure in his tone; he asked as he might have asked the state of her health. But Pearl knew what he thought.

"No, I didn't; I tried to keep him sober. I knew how sick an' sore on himself he'd be if he wasn't able to stand up with you like a gentleman. But he seemed like he didn't want anything to do with me—kept shaking me off and drinking more and more, until they threw him out of Walsh's. He went over the border, then, and got in some dirty crew over there. Next thing I knew was, some one came to me and said he was lyin' in a gully, 'cross the line. So I went an' got him—an' Lord knows the trouble I had gettin' him here."

"You've taken care of him when he was like this before?"

"Sure—the las' time was the night they took you to the hospital."

"Will he be fit to be seen to-morrow?"

She shook her head.

"I can't look out for him very much to-morrow," Stephen began, trying to think aloud; "and he mustn't go straying in where he'll be a shock, in this condition. Can you keep him from doing that?"

"I think I can—but don't you worry; if I can't do it without help, I'll get help."

"He's a nice boy, Pearl—when he isn't doing this."

"I know it—although I mostly see him when he's doing his worst."

"But you like him?"

"I love him!" she cried, a sort of fierce, defiant exultation in her tone. "Oh, I know all that can ever come of it! But that don't make me keep from doing it. If you could be here when he comes to, an' realises what I've done for him, an' why I had it to do! Did you ever wonder why some women stick so fast to drunken husbands? I know! It's because some men, when they're soberin' up, are like a little boy when he's been naughty and been spanked, an' cried, an' his mother's cried, too; and in a little while, she can't help bein' sorry for him because he feels so bad, and he can't help wantin' to creep close to her an' be

felt sorry for—an' they end by lovin' each other better'n ever. 'Tain't always that way—but I've seen it so a lot o' times. I had a husband, once; an' I left him, because I couldn't stand the starvation way he made me live. He never drank, nor smoked, nor swore, nor spit, nor 'chawed terbakker.' He kept all the commandments, except the one there ought to be about not killin' your wife's love. I get plenty, in the life I lead, to make me hate myself and feel I'm no better'n a jackal. But there'll be a high spot for me to-morrow, when Thad wants to lie here an' hold onto my hand like I was the Rock of Ages an' he dassent let go."

Stephen lay awake until the late December dawn; then dozed fitfully for a couple of hours, semi-conscious all the time and wondering what he should do to minimize the exasperation of Lucile at having no best man for her pageant.

As it worked out, Blaikie substituted; he and Crystal came, on the wedding day, to supplement Stilwell's representation of Montezuma camp at the Governor's wedding.

Stephen did not tell Lucile the truth about Thad; he was afraid that if she knew it she might not be able, when both she and Thad were at the camp, to avoid showing her resentment or condemnation. So he told her Thad was violently ill. But Lucile had her own opinion.

However, the feverish day wore on, somehow; the multitude of exasperations seemed not to spoil the effect Lucile had strained for; and every one said the wedding was "perfectly lovely" and the bride the most beautiful ever seen.

Lucile looked as if she had never known a worry. She was radiant, ethereal.

Stephen, as he stood at the altar waiting for her to complete her slow progress down the aisle, felt a strange clutch at his heart. The enveloping cloud of tulle, the shimmery whiteness of her gown, its stately length of train, her downcast modest glance, the virginal delicacy even of

the bouquet in her trembling hands, appealed overwhelmingly to his mysticism. He forgot all that had seemed to him so shoddy in the strain of making this display; he forgot his misgivings of every sort. The whiteness of Lucile's bridal attire seemed to him one with the whiteness of the young life she was joining with his. Suddenly, she typified to him as she never had before, all that he had idealised in maidenhood: its purity; its sweet dreams; its tender hopes; its outlook upon life as a romance; its morning freshness of sentiment, unclouded by compromise and disillusionment.

When she raised her eyes, shining with happiness, briefly to meet his, then dropped them modestly again, Stephen got the first thrill Lucile had ever given him.

If only, as they left the church, with the words of the solemn service in their ears, their pulses beating to the exultant rhythm of Mendelssohn's March, he could have taken her away—far away!—beyond the chatter of the crowd, out into the silent hills, beneath the friendly stars.

"Dearest," he entreated her when they were in the carriage that was to take them to the reception at her home, "let's elope!"

"Elope?" she echoed. "Why, we're *married*, honey!"

"I know," he answered; "but I want to think about it, to realise it. I don't want to stand up and shake hands with a mob of people and make a thousand fool remarks. Let's tell this man to drive us 'way out of town—to keep driving and driving. And by and by, when everybody's gone, we'll go back—and—get your little—things, so you can come with me—for—always."

Lucile laughed.

"Goosie! Of course we can't do such a thing. What you 'fraid of? Nobody's goin' to *eat* you, my own lamb!"

"Ah, but this—this thing that has just happened is so—so sacred, so wonderful. I want to think about it—just by ourselves——"

She kissed him.

"You'll have oceans of time for that," she said gaily. "Now you come on an' be nice to people. I want every one to know what a perfect love you are."

He tried not to be disappointed. She was excited; and this sort of thing was the custom of her country, of her tribe. He must not expect her to conform at once, and in a matter of such moment, to his longing for the companionship of the silence and the stars. She was leaving her people to make her home with him, and he charged himself to remember that he must have the utmost tenderness toward and consideration for her who was relinquishing so much that delighted her, to fare with him into the wilderness.

"Forgive me, darling," he begged, contritely. "I didn't realise what a selfish request it was."

Lucile was magnanimous. And Stephen stood for nigh on two hours, murmuring the proper formula over and over and over again to persons streaming, struggling past him on their way to look at the presents and get salad and sandwiches.

"It's a mess," was the curt comment of Crystal Blaikie, when she and Hugh were returned to their hotel room. "It's as messy a mess as I ever saw."

"I'm afraid it is," Hughie agreed, soberly. "Can't see whatever the Gov'nor was thinkin' of."

"He *wasn't* thinkin'—that's plain enough!" Crystal declared. "He wasn't the one who did the thinkin'."

Hughie was much depressed.

"He's not the man to wear it easy," he said. "How little sense men use when they're marryin'! Lord, Duckey! Did I have sense enough to marry you?—Or was it your sense that made me do it?"

CHAPTER IX

ON his business trips to the East, for some years past, Stephen had expended no little envy on the married couples he saw in hotels. The men seemed to be on business, like himself, and to have taken the women on a jaunt away from home cares. Through many a solitary breakfast Stephen had sat and listened to a couple at a nearby table laying their plans for the day. They were nearly always much interested in the projected shopping—those kindly, affectionate, generous, American men who displayed so unconsciously their natural aptitude for family life—and in where the womenfolk might like to go for dinner, and what “show” they wished to see, and so on. The spirit pervading these little excursions seemed so sweet and warm, the sense of comradeship conveyed to the lonely man was so charming, that he built many a pretty dream for his future as he watched his comfortably mated fellow travellers.

Now he was in New York, honeymooning and attending to business, and had some one with whom to make plans and discuss past pleasures.

Lucile had her heart set on stopping at the Waldorf; so there they went, rather than to the quieter Holland House where Stephen felt much at home. They went to the opera, and to innumerable things at the theatres, and dined at Sherry's and Delmonico's and the St. Regis and Martin's and other places whose fame had reached Nogales. And by day, Lucile shopped untiringly, and lunched at Maillard's, and bought candy, and corsage bouquets of double violets, and would have been deliriously happy had she known any one with whom she could ecstatically discuss lace and lingerie and the way Maillard gets drinking

chocolate so thick and creamy, and whether Martin or the Waldorf had the best French pastries.

Stephen's efforts to meet her needs were earnest but clumsy. But her efforts to meet his needs did not even die a-borning—they never got that far. He had told her how he used to envy men he watched with their wives; and Lucile was sure that now, with a young, pretty, eager wife, his cup of happiness was overflowing; she was so sure it must be, that she never made any effort to find out.

It was a pity to leave all this and face westward—to a mining camp. But Stephen had been so much away on account of illness, that he could not take time for a long-protracted honeymoon. He took Lucile to Washington for two days, to Philadelphia for a day, to Boston for a brief stay, and stopped in Chicago on the way home. In each place she shopped. And each day his fearfulness of what was to become of them at Montezuma, grew, and grew, and grew.

Lucile bought luncheon sets of pineapple silk gauze, embroidered in the Philippines; she bought trailing negligées of chiffon and lace; she bought rose-petalled silk candle shades, and hand-painted place cards, and Bohemian glass sherbet cups; she bought twenty-button white kid gloves, and silk stockings with thread lace insets, and pearl opera glasses, and ermine furs.

"Dearest," Stephen pleaded, "I don't know what you can ever do with all these things at the camp."

"Wait and see!" she replied archly. "You've never been anythin' but a poor, neglected bachelor, livin' every old which-way. Now, you're goin' to have things nice—you sweet darlin'! Don't you s'pose I want to dress up for you? And don't you s'pose I want to fix my table up pretty for you? And we aren't goin' to live there every single solitary minute of our lives, forever and ever—are we? And we'll have people to visit us sometimes—won't we?"

Stephen was not able to deny any of these things; so he made himself reflect that when she had seen her new

home, she would understand. He must be patient, and indulgent—and wait.

All girls had to learn; to learn economy and practicality and dozens of things which married women need to know. Doubtless, Lucile would learn as the rest do—and all the more blithely for having an unclouded honeymoon to look back upon. So he tried very hard not to cloud it.

There were some things, though, which it seemed strange to him she had not already learned—and which he sometimes wondered if marriage and experience could teach. These lacks were disclosed to him early in those intimacies which he approached with so much more reverence for them than Lucile seemed to feel. She accepted the closeness of their association in a very much more matter of course way than he could, or than he had supposed she would.

She left things about, in a helter-skelter way; and Stephen often found himself putting them away. She was amused at him when, having ordered breakfast served in their room, he blushing removed to cover her corsets and other undergarments—so that the waiter should not see them.

"I reckon he's seen dozens," she said.

Stephen winced.

"That doesn't," he answered gently, "make it necessary for him to see yours."

Lucile was unrebuked, but mildly interested.

"You're fussier than I am," she commented, "after all your rough life."

"Fussiness isn't a matter of the life you lead," he retorted; "it's in you or it isn't, I guess. And I haven't lived a rough life. It has been primitive, but not rough. Sleeping in a blanket, under the stars, isn't rough. And I never saw anything that wasn't nice, nor did anything that wasn't nice, when I lived with the Yaquis and the Mexicans. I've been with Mexican women in childbirth—when they needed me. But I never saw one expose herself unnecessarily."

Lucile drew her slippered but stockingless feet up under her flowing negligee.

"Mustn't shock the waiter!" she laughed, tolerantly.

They spent two days at Nogales before starting for the mine, showing the plunder and telling about the trip. Then they left on a morning train, and at two in the afternoon began their wagon journey to the camp.

Their new house was not quite ready; it was a four-square, 'dobe structure built around a little patio, and containing six rooms: sitting room, dining-room, kitchen, servant's room, and two bedrooms. Lucile had bought the furniture for it in Chicago, and was very eager to get at the disposition of it according to her ideas.

Until the completion of the new house, though, they were to live in Stephen's old quarters and have their meals at the mess, with Thad and Enry and Reilly and Arrick. Lufkin was in his own cabin, now, with Esperanza—and another *hope*.

It was dark when the honeymooners reached Montezuma, but every light in the camp that could be made to shine beamed a welcome for the Gov'nor and his bride; and every one, of every age, colour and condition, was out to greet them.

Lucile was delighted with her home-coming; it reminded her of scenes in her favourite English story-books, when the tenantry turn out to greet the earl's young bride.

After supper, served as gaily as the camp facilities would allow, in the mess-room where a fire of logs roared beneath the wide chimney, there was a reception. The Blaikies came in from their cabin, and the Lufkins from theirs; and there was a crowding of natives who had not been bidden but who wanted to *look*—and who did so, in their simple, eager, childlike way to which Stephen compared unfavourably the gazing and appraising at his wedding. There was a complete absence of pretence in this friendly curiosity; and in the other, the awkward efforts to mask

purpose, made "the whole show" vulgar, in his estimation.

The Mexicans stared and chattered and with profound politeness wished Lucile many children. The Indians were shyer; they marvelled worshipfully at "the fair white lily" who smiled ecstatically when told what they had called her.

Later, when the gathering had dispersed, and quiet reigned in the Governor's quarters, a number of the sweetest singers of the camp came to serenade the bride.

Stephen was deeply touched by the evidences of goodwill and affection in the greetings.

The fire in his sitting-room had burned to glowing embers; the wicks in his green-shaded student lamp were turned low; the plaintive sweetness of the music had become a memory. Lucile was in the bedroom, spreading her feminine belongings over the essentially masculine effects.

From his seat by the fire, Stephen watched her, dreamily. When they had shared quarters in big Eastern hotels, he felt as if their excursion together was an episode in the life of a Stephen Bellas somehow-different from the Governor of Montezuma, the dream-directed boy who had risked and endured and toiled and hungered as he unfalteringly followed his star. Now he was one with that boy again; the continuity of existence was resumed—but with a difference! Lucile was the difference. How different would she make this old familiar life of his? And would the differences she made be those he had dreamed of and longed for? Or would they be—? What power over himself he had given her! What power over his soul! How had he ever been able, in that vigil on his wedding-eve, to think that whatever befell he could find the romance and beauty and thrill of life in his work? What is a man's work but the expression of his soul? And if his soul be bound, how shall he know any triumph?

He looked at his *Graphic* supplement. What *unity* there was in it! How wedded that man and woman were—wedded in ideals and purpose; wedded in tastes and habits; wedded in memories and hopes; wedded in their son.

Through what had they struggled to that unity? Who made the most relinquishments?

Lucile kept calling out to him, at intervals. "There isn't a drawer in this place!" "Where can I put my toilet things?" "Don't these nails ever tear your clothes?"

"Come here, dear," he urged.

She came.

"I've started housekeeping already," she said gaily.

"Do it to-morrow," he pleaded, "when I'm busy. To-night I want to think about being married. I haven't quite realised it until now."

Lucile seated herself on his knees and wound her arms tightly around his neck.

"Haven't you?" she murmured.

"No; have you?"

"Oh, yes! I feel like I had been married a long, long time."

"Why?"

"I don't know; I just feel that way."

"Does it seem to you as if you were going to be at home here?"

Lucile hugged him closer, for a moment.

"Not here, I couldn't, of course," she answered, blithely; "but when I get my own house it'll be better. Then I can have Mamma and the girls here to visit me, and my bridesmaids; and we'll go on lots of lovely trips. It won't be bad. How long do you suppose we'll have to live here?"

"How long?"

"Before you get things started so you won't have to stay here?"

"Why," he answered, blankly, "I've never thought about leaving here to—to *stay*! All the interests I have in the world are here. And it'll take more than one lifetime to do half I've planned among these hills."

Lucile's hold loosened. She sat up straight.

"Even after you get a lot of money, would you stay

here, where you can't have any pleasure with it—just to get some *more* money?"

Stephen realised that he would have to talk to her as to a child.

"Dear," he said, "you won't have many happy moments here if you let yourself begin thinking of it as just a place to endure—a place to get money so we can go elsewhere and spend it. I hope we can take many beautiful trips—but I suppose this will always be 'home.' I hope we can often entertain friends—but there'll be 'in-between' times. If you don't find anything here to love and to be interested in, you'll be very miserable. I was afraid it might be so. I—I warned you. And you—you said you could be happy anywhere that I was!"

Lucile puckered her brow; she was trying very hard to think what she should say. The tone of patient admonition in Stephen's voice was not lost on her; she recognised it at once, and wondered if the simplest solution of this present difficulty were not the assumption of a childishness as great as he supposed. But Lucile was not childish, and had no relish for the rôle. She was a woman of the type in whom even a very brief experience of marriage produces a sort of hard sophistication. The element of mystery in this new relation was, for her, quickly solved; the romance of it soon lived through. She was the sort in whom familiarity breeds not contempt so much as sloth, slackness. Her effort to attract was made; she was resting from her labors. The veil of the unknown had been pierced; she was satisfied that she had seen all the mystery.

"Honey," she purred, warmly, "don't be cross. Of course I want to be where you are—always! I suppose it will be hard for me to get used to the life here, and you may have to be a little patient with me; but I'll get along, somehow. I'm a sensible woman. You don't need to talk to me as if I were five or ten years old. I understand. . . . Aren't you awful sleepy? *I am!*"

The next day was a busy one for Stephen. He left Lucile very sound asleep, at five o'clock. At seven, when he returned to breakfast, she had not stirred. He saw her at dinner, when she reported herself as having had a busy morning, unpacking.

Stephen had the great gift of twenty-minute naps; he could doze off almost at any time he chose, and wake, magically refreshed, in a quarter of an hour, or thereabouts. It was his custom to lie down, on the cot in his sitting-room, for a while after dinner each day. The longer siesta of the majority of persons in Mexico did not tempt him; while other people protracted theirs, he worked at his plans or correspondence or monthly statements.

Unaware of his habits, Lucile had his cot piled high with stuff she had taken out of the trunks; the room looked as if a commercial traveller were making a sales display of women's gear.

Stephen went over to the bunkhouse.

"We're unpacking," he said, casually. "May I drop down here for a few minutes?"

When he woke, he looked in on Lucile, who was tired, and very cross because she had "no place to put anything." Her tone rather than her words implied that he should have helped her, and that the lack of drawers, closets, shelves, exceeded his representation of the discomforts she would have to endure.

Stephen resisted an impulse to assume the task of getting Lucile settled. He was surprised at himself—but the fact remained that he went away with no more than a polite expression of regret for her inconvenience, and a self-reminder that if he began that sort of thing he would soon have all there was of it to do.

But it was not like him to be able thus to excuse himself. So he stepped in to ask Mrs. Blaikie how she managed with her possessions.

Hughie was at the office, and Crystal was asleep. But she heard Stephen's low-toned inquiry: "Anybody here?"

as he stepped into the living-room of her cabin. From the bedroom Crystal answered—the two rooms and a sort of lean-to kitchen were her whole domain—and a moment later emerged.

"I'm sorry," Stephen apologised.

She reassured him; and he stated his errand.

Crystal showed him her contrivances: wall pegs on wooden strips, and protectors of calico shirred on draw strings; waist boxes that served also as seats; shoe boxes ditto; and under each cot a big, coffin-box sort of thing with a hinged cover—these, set on casters, were really quite accessible receptacles.

"But it's easier for me," Crystal admitted, "than for Mrs. Bellas. I have so little to do with."

Stephen laughed.

"Whether that's good luck or good guidance," he said, "I congratulate you. I tried to tell Mrs. Bellas how she would find things—but she just couldn't realise how primitive they'd be. In the new house it'll be better—but even there she'll need to exercise some ingenuity, I guess."

"I'll go over and help her, if you think she'd like me to," Crystal offered.

She had some curiosity to see Lucile's "stuff," as she mentally termed it; she was nearly always in a mood from which she would gladly be diverted; and she was sincerely fond of Stephen and glad to help him in a perplexity which was not veiled from her by his effort to keep it so.

Lucile welcomed her hysterically. She was tired, conscious of her inadequacy to her strange situation, and homesick.

"I've always had Mamma and the girls to talk everything over with," she told Crystal. "At home, we run from one room to another, the whole time, askin' 'What would you do with this?' and 'How would you do that?' and givin' each other advice on everything. I—I don't believe I ever realised what it'd be like without them. Men are so different—aren't they? They don't understand, or take an

interest, or anything. They act like what they're doin' is the only real important thing."

"It's a man's world," Crystal commented with a weary cynicism as if she were tired of enunciating this truism. "Women have to get along in it the best they can. Most women'd think it was dead easy if they had Stephen Bellas to help 'em, though."

Lucile had not expected this, but she tried to look as if she had.

"He's a darlin'!" she murmured, as proudly as if she had made him so, or as if only she had found it out. "But of course he doesn't understand much about women——"

"I should say not!" Crystal blurted. "Not a damn thing!"

Lucile looked horrified; but Crystal did not beg her pardon; she addressed herself immediately to the problem of disposing of Lucile's "stuff," and talked curtly, as if almost wholly preoccupied.

To one who sought sympathy on her separation from "Mamma and the girls," Crystal was cold comfort.

"I wonder whatever that fool was thinking of to come here," Crystal exclaimed to Hughie, at their supper that night.

"Perhaps," he suggested, "she wonders the same about you."

Crystal grunted.

"If she'd ask me, I'd tell her why I came," she cried—and there was a ringing note in her voice that caused Hughie's face to soften its expression in a quite wondrous way.

"She might do the same for you," he said, gently.

"She doesn't *know*!" Crystal contended. "That's the sort she is. And if she did know, she wouldn't tell—for she's that sort, too! How can any one pretend that palms and rainbow bridesmaids and salad and ice cream can help to legalise her kind of vice?"

CHAPTER X

THE new house was finished in March. A fortnight before it was ready for occupancy, Lucile went up to Nogales on a visit—to purchase those household necessities with which bridal “showers” had not provided her, and to see her doctor. She stayed two weeks, and when she returned she brought Mrs. Harrod with her to help her settle.

Stephen, who no longer tried to deny to himself that his life had been rather ruthlessly invaded, was making the best of the situation as he deemed a man should: living on the best possible terms with the alien invader; conceding every detail of conduct in things unimportant; withstanding every demand upon his inner life. He had a theory about compromise: that the right exercise of it is one of the chief uses for all that a man knows; but that the wrong exercise of it is the beginning of spiritual death. He was anxious to omit no compromise that he ought to make, and to make none that he ought to omit.

He knew now just how far Lucile would wish him to go in getting the house ready during her absence. So he had all the furniture uncrated, rubbed up, and set in the new dwelling, to be arranged by Lucile and Mrs. Harrod at their leisure and according to their taste.

It did not occur to Lucile that he might have definite ideas about the house he lived in. She supposed—without having given anything that might be called thought, to the matter—that his ignorance of all those matters she held so important, was the outcome of indifference. Work—earning money—was man’s business; and home affairs—the spending of money and utilisation of purchases—was woman’s business. That there could be any need of her interest and co-operation in those plans of his for the de-

velopment of these properties, was as far from her mind as that he might care where she put her furniture and how she arranged her knick-knacks. This was not a personal short-coming of Lucile's, so much as a result of the system under which she had been educated: the curious, last phase of the zenana, in which women are not less enslaved because they like the slavery, nor because they are the tyrants of the regime which seems to rule them.

As a matter of fact, Stephen was not so much interested in the new house as he was in regaining sole possession of his old quarters. His feeling, for the past ten weeks, of being very much in Lucile's way, had been a severe discipline; but he supported himself through the trial by thinking that as soon as the new house was done, things would be a thousand times easier for every one.

They were! The tension slackened so much that everybody drew a long, deep breath of relief—not least of all Thad, who had been eating two meals a day in the presence of a lady whose reserve continually reminded him what a fool he could be and had been.

But Stephen found his gain in physical comfort more than off-set by a new strand in his mental tie-rope: Lucile reported that she would become a mother in September.

Stephen had often thought on how a man must feel when he learns that the joys and responsibilities of paternity are soon to be his, and that the woman he loves above all the world is to endure agony and brave death, to make their love immortally fruitful. He had supposed that this, beyond all possibility of doubt, was one of those high moments when a man felt the sublimity of life, of being a link in the eternal plan. But as it came to him, physiological details seemed to obscure spiritual experience.

He was glad, and he was sorry. He knew little about babies, except as he avoided stepping on them; but he had a reasonable amount of the average unmated human male's vague instinct for progeny. If it was unstimulated by tribal or economic incentives to be fruitful, it was—none

the less—capable of responding to the stimuli of his own social order. He was not moved to desire children for the defence of his tribe nor for the support of his old age; but he could have been moved to desire them for the interest and delight they might bring into his life, had he been able to anticipate bringing them up in an atmosphere of love and unity.

As things were, it was hard for him to be very glad. He could not reason himself out of an absurd feeling that it was Lucile's baby—as it was Lucile's house—and he was the man who was expected to pay the bills.

But he had, if not a strong instinct for paternity, a deep reverence for maternity. His tenderness of Lucile was not feigned. He would probably have been scarcely less tender to Mrs. Blaikie had she been bearing a child to Hugh. But neither Lucile nor her mother divined this; and they could hardly be blamed for their failure.

Mrs. Harrod beamed approval of Stephen, from her visit's beginning to its end; and carried the effulgence home with her. He fulfilled to the utmost her requirements in a son-in-law: he was generous, he was kind, he was courteous, he didn't dictate nor interfere—he "kept his place."

For a busy fortnight, the settling went on—Lucile directing, but spared all exertion. Mrs. Harrod stayed two weeks more, to rest after her labours. With her departure, Lucile developed a new perplexity for Stephen: she wanted to be "baby-ed," and when her mother was no longer there to do it, Stephen must.

She slept until nine o'clock mornings, and breakfasted in bed; so Stephen started his days much as before, coming down from the mine about six-thirty to join the group in the mess-room. He had dinner with Lucile, at noon, and usually went to his old sitting-room for his nap, and thence to work again. It was principally in the evenings that he felt Lucile's demands. Rising four or five hours later than he did, she was not sleepy at eight or nine o'clock—as he was. Stephen could never imagine how she spent her days;

but he could readily believe that they were long and monotonous. She cared nothing for outdoor life, for exercise; there was little need for her to sew. Her pastimes seemed limited to reading and fancy-work; she subscribed to a number of women's magazines, and all the thrills of adventure that another type of mind might derive from reading of travel, exploration, mountain-climbing, or the like, Lucile had in scanning pictures of timbales of sweetbreads, or bird's nest salad, or a matinee jacket made of ribbons, or suggestions for decorating the tables at a Springtime "bridge luncheon." As some persons dream of seeing Venice, or Carcassonne, or Rome on her seven hills, she dreamed of luncheon tables set with napery and silver and china and cut glass and shaded candles and center-mirrors to make each guest exclaim; and served with extraordinary foods attesting the fair hostess's originality. Between dreaming of a Paradise where the elegance of her parties should be the chief topic of the other inhabitants' conversation, and the loveliness of her clothes should be their despair, and reading romances about heroines who were madly loved, Lucile had time for little else. She began a number of articles of fancy work, but seemed never to finish any of them. She sent for patterns, finest nainsook, and lace, and started some baby-clothes—but abandoned them as "too fussy," and bought the layette.

Invariably, when evening came, she was very, very bored. It was then that she looked to Stephen for diversion. There was not much they could talk about: it was as if each of them spoke a different language, and in the one tongue common to them, had, each, a restricted vocabulary. This restriction did not, however, irk Lucile; like most childish persons, she was willing—eager!—to hear unending repetitions of a favourite tale—and to make them of tales she liked.

Lucile always dressed for the evening—not in formal evening garb, of course; that would have been too absurd; but in pretty afternoon frocks, embroidered silk stockings, and beaded slippers. She liked the little event of arraying

herself; she liked the imagined effect of it on her ladyship's retainers in this desert realm whereof she was the queen-consort; and she believed in the practice as efficacious in retaining the infatuation of a man though married to him.

Stephen did appreciate it. He had a horror of women who were "slack" about their appearance. The embroidered silk stockings and beaded slippers were ridiculous, his taste adjudged; and he was not appealed to by Lucile's style in gowns. But he liked coming home to a woman who was freshly groomed and "tidy." He liked bathing and shaving and changing his khaki for a business suit. There was nothing of the slouch in Stephen's make-up. He liked the care with which his table was set, with white linen and Lucile's bridal china and glass and silver. He even relished the novelty if not the taste of decorative dishes served to him as recommended in the back pages of women's magazines. Better material for complete domestication than Stephen presented, there could not be. He even evinced a desire to become interested in fancy work. And the tiny patterns, when they came, thrilled him by their very smallness.

He tried to believe that, after all, he had as much in marriage as most men have. But when Lucile came and sat on his knees and courted his caresses, he gave them so courteously, rather than gladly, that he was set a-wondering. Were other men, even those who had married as they chose, as "cold" after a brief time as he was? Was that ardour which he had missed, a hunter's eagerness only and never again fanned by the warmth of hearth fires?

In Pullman smoking-rooms, at stag gatherings, in border saloons and after metropolitan dinners, no topic of talk was more common than the infidelities of married men. Stephen had always loathed this talk. He was not condoning it now—but he thought that he was, perhaps, beginning to understand why there was so much of it that of itself it constituted a sort of free-masonry among most men. If marriage had ever engaged their respect, they could not—he thought—have boasted their disrespect of it so jestingly.

Rosamund and Peaches came, late in April, and stayed through May. Stephen thought it would give the girls greater freedom for that roaming around in nighties and visiting from room to room while they dressed and undressed, if he were to sleep in his old quarters. But Lucile would not hear of this.

"They might think it was—queer," she said.

So Stephen stayed.

In July he had to go east on a business trip. Lucile went with him as far as Nogales. It was the first of August when he got back there, and in council the Harrod womenfolk decided that Lucile would better stay on until after her confinement in September. She would have to return for that, in any case, as there was no physician at Montezuma camp nor within fifty miles, and probably no nurse would go that far to care for Lucile.

Accordingly, Stephen went back to his old rooms; and for several months there was little to remind him that he was married, except the closed new house and Lucile's letters full of "Honey-darling" expressions of her wifely fervour.

He went to Nogales, of course, to welcome the little wayfarer from afar. His concern for Lucile was entirely genuine. He dreaded the ordeal for her, until he was half sick; he agonised through it with her, until he was wholly unnerved. It was, in truth, comparatively an easy birth; but Lucile made it seem the supreme of suffering, and every one about her was exhausted, sympathetically. There was little emotion left wherewith to greet the mite whom Stephen was charged to hail as his little daughter. He regarded her about as emotionally as he might have regarded a new kitten or a new calf.

When he had had a refreshing sleep, at the hotel—out of the hysterical commotion at the Harrod home—he was able to think about his new relationship, and to be stirred by it; to recall glimpses he had had of tender, delightful companionship between father and daughter. He did not

realise how deep his yearning was for comradeship; but he found himself glowing with anticipation of all the happy times he would have with this newcomer who was his very own flesh and blood.

The enthralling company that a baby can be, Stephen was unable even to guess; but he had visions, as he lay abed that first morning of his paternity, of a young girl "big enough to understand" (alas! as if bigness carried understanding with it) and eager to know; full of delicious whimsies that would pique him, and of tenderness that would enwrap him, and of dreams that would stir his soul. How wonderful it would be to adventure with her where fancy led! To wake from nightmares of the world's greed and coldness, to the dewy morning freshness and sweetness of her outlook upon life! To feel the graying embers of one's soul-fires fanned by the quick breath of her young enthusiasms! . . .

Some one has said that the times in his life when a man wants and needs a mistress are infinitely fewer than the times when he wants and needs a mother. They are fewer, also, than the times when he wants and needs the companionship of youth—of the untrammelled spirit and the heart unafraid.

Here and there in the world are women who, in loving men, meet all these needs. Every woman could meet them, if she would. . . .

It was late October before Lucile felt strong enough to go back to the mine; and when she thought of being fifty miles from a doctor, with a new baby to take care of, she declared that her strength was not the only consideration—there were other reasons why it seemed to her advisable to stay on at Nogales until after Thanksgiving—and then until after Christmas. Stephen came up for those holidays; and when he returned after the second celebration, he took Lucile and baby Eileen, and a nursemaid from Los Angeles—and Gran'ma Harrod!

The house, closed for six months, became—when opened—a too-small incubator for Eileen, whose zealous attendants seemed all too few for her many needs and all too many for the amount of space Eileen's self and her belongings did not occupy. The six rooms (for now the cook was relegated to outside sleeping quarters) fairly bulged with infant paraphernalia. The household schedule was made and re-made with reference to baby's bath and naps and feeding times.

Stephen's retreat, now, to his old quarters, was unprotected.

But Esperanza's first-comer was a blithe young citizen exacting about as much attention as a frolicsome puppy—and the advent of his little brother or sister was heralded.

Yet the Lufkins' two-room cabin seemed ample for all their needs, and Dan was a picture of contentment.

CHAPTER XI

DURING the next four years, Montezuma disgorged copper ore at the rate of 500 tons a day, and it was ore that yielded 6 per cent. Montezuma shares which had once sold at ten cents, then at twenty-five, rose to five dollars. Out of his own earnings Stephen, who still held more than half of all the Montezuma stock, opened operations on another of his properties, an old silver mine once worked by the Spaniards, its ore carrying a thousand ounces of silver to the ton. Six fabulous months of this, and he was ready to prove a third mine sufficiently to capitalise it as far as he wanted to, reserving the majority of its shares for himself.

This meant two other camps to establish and maintain. It meant many trips to financial and supply centres. It meant a rapid growth of respect in money circles for the young man who had strolled, empty-handed and unarmed, into the Forbidden Land of the Yaquis, lived with them for years, won their confidence, and had their actual aid in locating many of the twenty mines his claims to which read, characteristically enough, "Porfirio Diaz, for The United States of Mexico, grants," etc.; and were signed by the old dictator's own hand.

Stephen was by way of becoming a personage. He was interviewed wherever he went; and as he talked only of the country where his interests were, and would not discuss himself, garbled and oftentimes lurid accounts of his romantic life were written by sundry young gentlemen who had never seen an Indian other than those in Buffalo Bill's Show, and whose notions of Mexico were no more definite than that it is somewhere to the south.

Lucile faded into the background of his consciousness.

He saw her, from time to time, but gave little thought to her. She interfered not at all with his life; and she seemed to be quite content.

Summers in camp were too warm for Eileen; so she and her mother and nurse took flight early—usually for a cottage by the sea at Long Beach, where Mrs. Harrod and the girls soon joined them. Holidays were spent at Nogales. Fall "house parties" were entertained at the mine, their object being partly to entertain Lucile and partly to facilitate the mating of Rosamund and Peaches with desirable young men.

Each month Stephen placed in bank a stated sum to Lucile's credit. He never mentioned it—much less inquired what she did with it—but he knew that she was a pretty good business woman. She was generous to her mother and sisters, and treated herself well, but she was not extravagant. She had learned how to make money go a long way, and she was shrewd, not to say "small," in many transactions. In consequence, her bank balance was substantial and she had considerable sums well-placed at high interest.

Stephen carried a hundred thousand on his life, for her; and he had given her enough shares in Montezuma, Cortez, and Español, to assure her a living even without his monthly checks.

So, money—that matter fruitful in domestic discord—was never mentioned between them; and their conversation was no less free from other possibilities of unpleasantness.

Lucile regarded her married life as a shining exemplification of her pet aphorism: "He minds his business, and I mind mine." That she and Stephen had little common business did not seem to her either singular or unfortunate. It was as she had been bred to expect; and she was complacent rather than grateful for the way her life met her expectations.

With her share in the financial emoluments of Stephen's discoveries and labours, she was well content. But when there began to be other rewards for him, she was determined

to share those which appealed to her—such, for example, as the attentions paid him by persons of importance.

Yielding to her insistence, Stephen took her on an eastern trip with him, the first since her honeymoon trip of five years before.

It was an uncomfortable experience for him. Lucile's pretensions humiliated him; she was all the things he most disliked in woman. He had never disliked her before; and he was shocked when he realised how he now felt about her.

On their return from this trip, Lucile unfolded to him her ideas about their future.

"It is absurd," she said, "for a man of your means, honey, to keep his family at a mining camp—like a foreman or superintendent. And anyway, Eileen has got to be educated; she can't grow up with no associates but Mexicans and half-breeds."

"No," Stephen admitted, "she can't."

"And really, darlin', while I've never said much about it, because I once told you I could be happy any place you are, it *has* been pretty hard for me. I'm young; and I can't help knowin' I'm pretty. I love company an' gaiety. I love to entertain. I've always dreamed of havin' a lovely home. We've got plenty of money—and we can't enjoy it! You're away, lots, an' meet interestin' people. But I'm just stuck down there in the desert with nobody to speak to. Don't you think we ought to have a home in Los Angeles, an' try and *be* somebody—so when Eileen gets older she'll have some kind of position in society?"

Stephen's mind was essentially fair. He could see the situation from Lucile's point of view quite as clearly as from his own—indeed, more clearly. She had, in truth, accepted from him for five years her whole support, the partial support of her family, and a goodly bank balance, without giving him in return one single thing that he desired. Her account with him was by many degrees less honest than that of the average outcast with her customer—but

Lucile did not realise this. If she could be said to think at all, she thought her part of the marriage contract more than fulfilled. It was natural for her to crave society, gaiety. The fact that her sacrifice of this had been futile so far as Stephen's welfare or happiness was concerned, did not argue that it was less hard for her to bear. A woman who could feel that her presence in a wilderness made it Paradise enough for the man she loved supremely, might well count all the world's lure as nothing compared with her high satisfaction. But Lucile, while she was unconscious of her futility, was not upborne with any sense of service. She had, in a way, sold her youth and her desire, for gold. And now, feeling that she had delivered of them generously, she wanted to spend her money in a pleasant mart.

Stephen had no rage against her. He had scarcely any resentment. Sometimes he felt almost apologetic to her as if he had somehow spoiled her life. She had scarcely inconvenienced him. He did not grudge her what she had cost him. He had no one else dependent on him for support, and it was doubtless right that a man who could earn, should share with some of those who must be fed and clothed and housed and entertained through efforts other than their own. Many women, most women, got all this for themselves in marriage and got with it also more of the kind of life they cared to live, than Lucile got. If most women gave more than she did, he argued, it was because of several reasons not operative in her case. She gave him all of her society that he asked for, and more. She gave him his child, and would fain have given him more had he been willing to have them. She gave him herself, beyond his desire. It was, doubtless, her misfortune rather than her fault that she had so little he wished for.

The more he reminded himself of these things, the more generous toward her Stephen became, and the gentler in his consideration of all her wants.

"I know," he granted her, when she said they ought to have a house in Los Angeles; "you're quite right. I should

have thought of it long ago. Eileen must have nice little girls to play with, and a good school, and music lessons. I can't say I'm keen about making a place for her in society. But I want her to have everything that can help her to make her own place, and make it in any kind of society she aspires to. And I'm sorry we didn't build in Los Angeles long ago—for your sake! I'm away so much, and likely to be away more and more. Not much company for you when I'm there either—I'm afraid. It isn't fair to you. Go ahead and build. Make yourself a home as near to your dreams as you can."

They were in their drawing-room on the Golden State Limited.

Lucile rose from her seat, flung her arms about Stephen's neck, and kissed him rapturously, many times.

"You are the sweetest love in the whole world!" she cried, enthusiastically. "I just know there isn't another husband, anywhere, who is half so kind and half so precious! If only we could be together more! In our own beautiful home—enjoying our money. I hope my Honey-Boy won't keep workin' so hard as this very much longer! I dream of the time when we can be together like other married people are, goin' out together to lovely parties and havin' the best old times!"

Stephen winced at the thought of the future she held out to him—that life of nothingness, in a house of her building and furnishing, among acquaintances of her making, in the city of her choice; and most of all he winced at her uncomprehendingness of the tragedy this life would be to him.

He tried to tell her how he felt about the development of all those properties; the establishment on them of thriving, well-governed colonies of natives; the building of roads, the maintenance of schools—the whole romance of civilisation coming within one man's scope, in the work of one man's life.

"My heart has been there," he explained, "since I was a little dreaming boy, buffeted about in a rough world but

always in my own mind an explorer, a discoverer, a wizard in that magic which makes the mountains of the wilderness yield up their hidden treasure, and the valleys of the wilderness bloom with industry and education and contentment. Would you wish me to abdicate?"

Lucile did not think in metaphor. She translated, as Stephen talked. And like many translators, the meaning she caught was not that he intended.

"I really," she answered, plaintively, "have no desire to be terribly rich. Seems to me that when you've got enough, the sensible thing to do is to quit, and enjoy it."

"But my enjoyment is there," he persisted.

"You think it is!" she retorted. "But that is because you have never tried to find it anywhere else. Wait till we're settled in Los Angeles, and see if you don't just love it!"

"You don't suppose," he demanded in alarm, "that I'm going to live there?"

Lucile was offended.

"I suppose you're going to live where your family does," she answered.

"But you know I can't do my work there!"

"You can be there a good deal, though—if you try." She was tempted to anger, but forbore. "Let's not fuss about it now, honey," she pleaded. "Let's just go ahead and do the best we can—isn't that sensible?"

So the bungalow was built: a roccoco Spanish efflorescence with graftings of the worst Moorish; and furnished in a hodge-podge of Louis Quinze, Colonial American, Jacobean, Turkish, and what-not.

That it could be the business of a home-builder to study architecture and decoration, occurred to Lucile no more than to nine hundred and ninety out of every thousand who built and furnished homes five years ago. The growth in taste in domestic matters has been, in the last half decade, phenomenal. Even women like Lucile are absorbing good ideas to-day; those of them who live in social strata where "periods" are studied and discussed, pick up a patter of

terms and a smatter of understanding, and copy good models rather intelligently, as they do in hats and gowns.

Lucile was guiltless of taste, either instinctive or cultivated. Stephen had not cultivated his taste, but he had an innate feeling for true beauty: for loveliness of line and harmony of colourings and, above all, for reserve in expression. Lucile's house was like crashing discord to him; it jangled his nerves.

He was ashamed of the effect it had on him; and told himself that he was getting "mighty Percyfied" for a frontiersman who had lived in tepees and huts and bunkhouses these fifteen years. A man experienced—as Stephen was not!—in analysing his emotions, would have understood why Lucile's clutter of irrelevant, unrelated detail affected him so disagreeably. But Stephen blamed himself, severely, for his aversion from it.

He was inclined to judge himself mercilessly, as he returned to the mines after his first visit to the completed home in which Lucile and Eileen were now installed. He blamed himself more after he got back to Montezuma camp, where he found Hugh Blaikie in black sorrow. Crystal was gone!

Enry met Stephen at the railroad. He was driving the Governor's car.

"How's everything?" Stephen inquired, when he had tossed his suitcase and bag into the tonneau, and climbed in beside Enry.

Enry's manner at once betrayed that something was wrong. He hesitated—not knowing just how to break the news.

"What is it, Duret?" Stephen urged. "Get it out! Any one hurt?"

"No," Enry answered. Then, "Yes—Blaikie ees hurt. Hees wife has—gone a-way!"

"Away where?"

Enry shrugged.

"He does not know."

"Did she go—*with* any one?"

"Perhaps,—yes! Weeth a man."

Enry did not express his sentiments about the happening, but Stephen suspected how all the boys felt: that it was a "darn good thing for Hughie," and he'd realise it when he got a little used to the idea. The Governor was a bit inclined to feel that way, himself—until he saw Hughie. Never, in his experience of men, had Stephen seen such havoc in any man's face.

Hughie said little; he was gruff, uncommunicative. But after supper he came over to Stephen's sitting-room. It was evident he wanted to talk to the Governor; so the other men melted away as casually as they could.

When the last of them was gone, Hughie began, bluntly: "I got a letter."

Stephen and Enry had brought the mail.

"From—Mrs. Blaikie?"

"Yes. She's at Catalina. I want a leave of absence, Governor. I'm going to fetch her home."

"Does she—want to come?"

Hughie nodded. Tears were rolling down his care-furrowed cheeks.

Stephen could not think of a thing to say. He was so fearful of saying the wrong thing, and hurting Hughie, that he sat as if dumb.

A rain was driving against the windows. The swish of water on the glass, the snap and sputter of burning logs in Stephen's fireplace, were the only sounds for what seemed a very long time.

Hughie felt, however, that the silence was sympathetic. When he could command himself, he spoke.

"Would you be willing," he asked, "for Enry to drive me to the railroad in the machine?"

"Why, of course, Blaikie! And he'll go over for you when you come back."

"Thanks, Gov'nor! It'll be—kind of—hard, for her—

poor little girl! I hope the fellows will make it as easy as they can."

"I'm sure they will," Stephen declared, encouragingly.

"You see," Blaikie went on, brokenly, haltingly, "she couldn't help knowing that no one here cared much about her. The things in her that a body can love, are not easy to know—and it often seems as if she tried terrible hard to keep any one but me from knowing them. She's had a hard life, Gov'nor—I daresay you've guessed as much. And what she's been through has left its scars on her—same as what I've been through has battered me. We've both been in the bottom-most pit of hell—we met there and came out together. It was in Shanghai. You've heard how deep the mire is, there! I was trying to find the bottom—and I did! She had found it some time before. I don't know what it was that made her kind of 'mother' me—in that hell-hole! But she did. She tried to keep me from being as much of a beast as I wanted to be. Seemed to feel that I had been a man, once. I had, too, Gov'nor! Didn't expect to get back, though. Hardly wanted to get back—till she made me. Seems I had the same effect on her. Can't explain it! Mystery—those things are! But we pulled out, together—and got married, regular, by a Scottish parson in Shanghai. Didn't really expect her to stick, but figured I'd give her the chance. It was standing by and giving a chance to her, that made me feel human again. Thought I'd lost all decent feeling. But when she appealed to me, I found there was a spark left. So I tried, too. She stuck better'n I did! No other woman God ever made would have stood by me through what she has. Not one! No angel that had never fallen, could have done it, Gov'nor. She understands. Poor girl gets bored to death with this existence. Don't see how she stood for it so long. The smoother I'm going along, the less I seem, to her, to need her. Been purring along a smooth sea, lately—not a devil in the way—so busy. It was the big moments she fed on. Don't suppose you know! When the storms came, and she

could feel our ship tugging at its anchor—feel the anchor *hold!*—she was happy. It was being becalmed she hated. All good sailors do! This fellow she went with—he was one of a movie troupe that come down here to make a mining and desert picture while you were gone—probably gave her emotion something to rise to, for a week and a day. He's ditched her, now, in Catalina—and I'm going to bring her home."

No wonder Stephen was thoughtful, after Hughie went back to his cabin! But in all his pondering he missed the point that was vital to him. He cursed himself for a "soft," spineless, self-pitying wretch, who could not bear Lucile because her tastes and desires were different from his own. He felt as if some one ought to kick him. How on earth had he fallen into such a state of mind? He missed the significance of Hughie's: "It was the big moments she fed on. Don't suppose you know." He did not realise that there never had been any tie between Lucile and him—and never could be. He did not try to conjecture what the strength of his devotion and forgiveness for her might be, if she had ever seemed to need him, or made him need her.

He called himself, in a term borrowed from Blaikie, "a rotter." He had lost that self-respect, before losing which—he had told Blackburn—he wanted to die.

CHAPTER XII

IN Lucile's mind the attainment of beauty was not a self-satisfaction so much as a social lure. Dress and surroundings had their value in her eyes principally as she thought they would impress persons whose good opinion of her she desired. Even the refinements of personal cleanliness were not a necessity to herself in anything like the degree that they were concessions to the more exacting standards of her social superiors. That in her which once made her leave unfinished and fraying the bottom edges of shirt-waists whose upper parts were intricately embroidered and inset with lace, now caused her to buy cheap mattresses and satin quilts, expensive gowns, hats, furs, and coarse cotton underwear; sweetbreads and fresh mushrooms for company, and—because Lucile did love to put money in the bank—round steak and mashed turnips for the family dinner.

Stephen gave her forty thousand dollars to build and furnish her home. She achieved the effects she most desired, and added nearly ten thousand dollars to the amount she had out at 8 per cent. interest.

It very soon became evident to her, in Los Angeles, that Stephen's name was well enough and favourably enough known to be a distinct advantage to her. But to this privilege there was a penalty attached: she felt that people wondered why Mr. Bellas was so seldom in his new house. Perhaps they wondered less than she imagined them to be doing. But she was very fearful that Stephen's protracted absences were going to injure her social enterprises.

"Mrs. Effingham, who lives in that grand big white house 'kitty-corners' from us, called on me yesterday," she wrote

Stephen, in one letter, "and I certainly was pleased ; because they're lovely people and in the best clubs and everything. You see her name in the society news almost every other day. I think she liked me real well. She seemed to. There is a dancing class her children belong to that I hope I can get Eileen in. It's private, and meets in the ballrooms of these lovely houses, and nearly all the children who go to it go in limousines. From the way Mrs. Effingham talked, I believe Eileen is going to get asked. Oh, honey, I do want for her to have every advantage! She has her fine home now, and such lovely children to play with. I am delighted that we chose this neighbourhood. It certainly is select. But I can't help worrying for fear people will talk about you not being home more. If they ever get to do that, it will spoil everything. It seems to me you could come oftener and stay longer, if you tried. Business isn't everything, darling Honey-Boy. Try to think what this means to Eileen and to me. You can't say we haven't had to wait for our chance. And I know you don't want to spoil it for us now we've got it. I know you can't stay here all the time. But I'm sure you could manage to come enough so that people wouldn't talk."

If Stephen had had any one to whom he could show such a letter, with whom he could discuss it, he would easily have been made keen to detect its small percentage of value. But his code of honour and dignity did not permit him to confide his domestic perplexities to any one. There is something to be said for this code; but there are things to be said against it. Grievances, incompatibilities, and hurts are frequently so much the better for a good airing, that they soon thereafter cease to exist. A calm, sympathetic, judicious review of secret pangs by one not involved in causing or bearing them, is as necessary to the spirit's recovery, oftentimes, as physical diagnosis is to the body's ills. The argument against confidences is that there are so few persons able or willing to respect them.

It was not, however, fear of indiscretion in his counsellor that kept Stephen from seeking guidance. It was his sturdy, old-fashioned notion that a husband's obligation toward his wife is to make all the world, so far as he is able, think she is without fault—as the Queen of Spain is, officially, without legs.

Even in his most secret soul-communion, he never alleged anything against Lucile—only against the haplessness of their being bound together who belonged so far apart.

He was somewhat grimly aware, as he read this letter, that she never once urged his presence because she yearned for it—only for fear of what the neighbours might say of his absence. But he honestly did not know any reason why Lucile should desire his company, except for appearance sake. And he rather liked her for not pretending that her pleading was sentimentally inspired. The only times he ever came near to liking Lucile were when he could, as now, see clearly what she was driving at.

As he thought the thing over, it appeared to him that he did indeed owe it to his wife and daughter to put them above suspicion of neglect by him.

So he went to Los Angeles. He made the most earnest effort of his whole five-and-thirty years. He was ashamed to think himself a man who could not put through an obvious obligation like that. His scorn of himself because he found this duty so hard, was as stinging as the cut of a long lash.

It developed that Lucile thought a man should share with his family the beneficial effects of such desirable acquaintance as he made through his work in the world. That persons who knew Stephen as a man of affairs, might be interested in his company and not interested in hers, did not occur to her.

"You must meet lots of prominent people," she urged. "Why don't you bring them home, or ask me out to meet them, too? Just giving me some of the money you make,

isn't everything. I ought to share all the honours that come to you, too!"

Well! wasn't that marriage as generally interpreted? Could any reasonable man object?

Stephen couldn't. He had no friends in Los Angeles, but he had a number of acquaintances among business and professional men; and a few of them had, in times past, asked him to their homes or introduced him to their wives in public meeting places. It seemed appropriate that he and his wife should now ask to their home those who had shown him hospitality.

Lucile asked innumerable questions about who they were and what they amounted to.

"It would be wonderful," she sighed, "to start off with just the right people."

Her husband could not be sure just how "right" they were who had welcomed him; his valuations left out of account the society editor's point of view. But he did what he could.

One of the first persons he thought of was Blackburn; but he shrank from introducing to Lucile that man whose advice he had sought as to how he might escape from marrying her. Blackburn had never asked him how the marriage had turned out, and he had not offered any confidences; but he surmised that Blackburn knew—and it seemed, somehow, unfair to Lucile to ask Blackburn to meet her.

So he chose those acquaintances who had least possible knowledge of his domestic affairs, and asked them to a dinner at his new home.

Lucile was delighted. It seemed to her that now, at last, they were fairly getting started on what she considered a normal married life.

She was a rather effective "company" housekeeper—fussy, but able to make a good showing; it was her daily, home-folks-y housekeeping that was spiritless and slack.

For this dinner, she made a supreme effort, and it was a

very pretty affair. The table was set—of course—with her handsomest things: her best linen and lace and silver and china and crystal. The decorations were of orchids—other flowers being “so common” in southern California. (If Lucile had lived in a jungle where orchids grow, her ideal of “style” in flowers would have been edelweiss or dandelion.)

In a new gown of daring and ultra cut, Lucile was putting place cards on her table and superintending the lighting of the candles under her orchid-silk shades, when Stephen came into the dining-room.

“Honey,” she cried, ecstatically, “isn’t it beautiful? Oh, *this* is what I’ve dreamed of, all my life! Now, listen! You’re to take in Mrs. Ames. Her husband’s the most important man coming, and she takes his rank, you know. Mr. Ames takes me in. Is he nice?”

Stephen’s stare of bewilderment faded, and gave place to a somewhat sardonic grin.

“Ames is hard of hearing,” he answered, cheerfully, “If he sits on your right, you’ll have his bad ear next you.”

But Lucile was not dismayed.

“I wonder,” she mused, “who he’d like next him?”

“The youngest and prettiest you’ve got,” her husband assured her.

“The Ameses keep a butler,” Lucile murmured, anxiously.

“How do you know?”

“Miss Westover told me.”

“Miss *Who*?”

“Miss Nelda Westover, of the *Post-Herald*—the society editor. I’ve engaged her as my press agent.”

“Your *what*?”

“You have to do it—when you’re new. She’s going to put my picture in the paper to-morrow and tell about this dinner. They can do a lot for you. She went over the list of guests with me and told me heaps about them. She says Mrs. Ames has a terrible tongue—but you’ve got to

keep in with her, because they are awfully important. And, oh! she told me what charities the best people go in for, and how to get on the right side of the biggest women—it's wonderful! All for ten dollars a week!"

Stephen tried to think of something to say. And Lucile mistook the reason for his silence.

"Do you think it's extravagant, honey?" she asked, plaintively.

"Extravagant?" he echoed. "No; but so—so silly! Would I pay ten dollars a week to a reporter, an interviewer, to tell me what I must think of men?"

"That's different," she retorted, flushing angrily.

"Is it? Well, maybe so! I don't know this game you're playing. But I know it doesn't fit any of my notions of hospitality."

Lucile dabbed at her eyes with a small handkerchief edged with "real" lace.

"I might have known something would happen to spoil the evening for me," she sobbed, fleeing. "It was too good to last!"

Feeling like the meanest brute alive, Stephen went into the library (lined with half-morocco sets of standard authors) and sat down—in an all-morocco chair.

When he raged inwardly against Lucile but made no effort to tell her how he felt, he called himself unreasonable. Yet, every time he tried to express his variance with her, he came out in some such way as this: Lucile cried, and he pacified her—and the next day he bought her something expensive and unnecessary, as a penitential offering.

After all, she was playing her game according to the rules of its champions. Why take issue with her because it was not a different game? A very large part of the world—and a part quite generally conceded most important—followed the same regulations. It was the kind of thing Lucile was fitted for, by temperament and by training. Why ask her to aspire—or, if you so prefer, to condescend—

to the totally different plane which Stephen's temperament and training made him move in?

"I'm sorry as I can be, dear," he pleaded, at her door. "You were right—it is different!"

The dinner was a great success. Every one present said so. Stephen was congratulated on his pretty wife, on his fine home, on Lucile's skill as a hostess.

On his next meeting with Blackburn, that gentleman said:

"Well, Bellas, as an adviser to the love-lorn, I'm not such a bungler—*am* I? I've heard from half a dozen sources what a stunning woman your wife is, and what a clever hostess, and how proud of her you are. 'Member how scared about it you were?"

Stephen smiled. He felt it was what he called a "sickish" smile; but Blackburn did not seem so to regard it.

"I think you owe it to me," he said, jovially, "to introduce me to the charming lady."

Eileen was so like her mother that she might well have been a wonder-child of no-paternity. Stephen's efforts at comradeship with her were as futile as those he made for comradeship with Lucile. Sometimes their futility was comical, and sometimes it was very sad. Eileen hailed his every advent with demonstrations of delight and loudly bewailed his every departure. This was partly in accord with her mother's teaching, and partly because Stephen was a lavish purveyor of toys, sweets, and festive outings. Eileen had every reason for loving her father, and she did love him—in her way; which was the same way and animated by the same sentiments as her mother's.

Stephen had a notion that children love story-telling, and he tried that method of establishing himself in Eileen's favour and confidence. (It hurt him far more that his baby's relations with him should be solely of thanks for value received, than he was hurt by his realisation of her mother's being on that basis.) But Eileen was devoid of fancy as she was of freckles or stone-bruise or warts or

briar-scratches. Her taste in stories was for nice little girls who wore pink silk dresses and large, floppy hats, and carried baskets of flowers at "swell" weddings. In tales of lovely princesses, her keenest relish was for what they "had on."

It was hard for Stephen to believe that a young mind could be so stamped with the pattern of an older one. But, on reflection, he reminded himself that all her life the child had heard little or no talk except her mother's, her grandmother's, her aunts', and her nurse's. No wonder she reflected nothing but dry-goods and social display!

He wished he knew how to reach those depths of unworldliness which he was sure all souls must have that come, "trailing clouds of glory from God who is our home." But Eileen baffled him as completely as her mother did.

He accepted from her, one day, an invitation to a party whereat Eileen was to set forth for the first time a new set of dishes he had just given her. It was astounding to see how precocious were the child's ideas of effect. A lace center-piece, loaned by her delighted mother, was her "bes' tab'ecloth"; she had flowers in a small glass vase, and two tiny candelabra from her doll house effects, set with pink wax tapers.

"Did you ever see anything so cute, honey?" Lucile implored Stephen. "Look at the way she's got that table set!"

There were places for Lucile and Stephen (sitting on the floor) and for Eileen and her biggest doll, a little neighbour and her biggest doll—these four on small chairs. And there was "really, truly" food: ice cream, and jumbles as big as pennies, and cocoa in the teapot, for Eileen to pour. Stephen was invited to serve the ice cream, and he complied in his best company manner—serving Lucile first, then the little neighbour, then Eileen, and then the two dollies.

Eileen stared at him with less amusement than scorn.

"Silly!" she cried. "Dolls can't eat!"

Stephen looked at Lucile, to see how this struck her. But Lucile was elated at the "smartness" of her child, and beamed at her wonderingly.

Afterwards, Stephen tried to say something about the incident; he was appalled that even Eileen's mother instinct should be limited by the thought of her play-children as things merely to dress and take to parties.

"I don't know," he said, gropingly, "how it's done—but isn't there a theory that it's important how little children play—that it has a relation to their after lives—that dolls are really a part of education—isn't there something they call mother-craft that little girls learn with their doll-babies—is that kindergarten?"

"I'm going to send Eileen to kindergarten in the fall," Lucile replied. "There's a very select one right near here—that the best children go to. I think they teach games and little songs. Eileen has quite an idea of singing. Sometimes she stands up and shakes her head and tries to act like a concert singer—I nearly die, she's so funny!"

"But couldn't you, when you talk to her, try to make her feel more—more——"

"More *what?*"

"Why, get her to have some other idea of her dolls than just dressing them up and having parties for them?"

Lucile laughed.

"Why, honey," she cried, amusedly, "what d'you suppose little girls mostly do with their dolls? *Play mining?*"

"Certainly not!" He tried not to speak impatiently; for he could see that Lucile did not understand. "I don't know anything about children—except what I can remember. But I had an idea that child-minds were kind of—well! young, and fresh, and eager to feed on fancies——"

"The trouble with you, is," Lucile interrupted, and her tone was not free from acid, "you think other people haven't got feelings because they're not the same kind as your own. I'm used to havin' you think that about me."

But now you have to find fault with that blessed baby, that everybody else says is the prettiest and sweetest child they ever saw! I declare, Stephen, I can't understand you. Seems like I just can't please you. Other people praise me and tell me how lovely I am and how proud you ought to be, and all—but seems like you do nothin' but pick on me. Sometimes I feel like I'll go home to Mamma, an' not try to please you any more."

She flung herself, sobbing, on the chaise-longue in her bedroom.

Stephen stood looking down at her, less moved by her tears than he had ever been before. It was not possible, he told himself, that she could believe that she had been trying to please him. Not even her kind of mind could be capable of such self-deception as that! What had she ever done, in the six years of their marriage, but please herself, at his expense? When had she met other than with some such scene as this, his slightest suggestion or effort to arrive at an understanding on any issue?

He drew a chair up and sat down beside her.

"Listen to me, Lucile," he said, calmly and in a tone that commanded her attention. "There *is* something wrong in our relations—there always has been. I haven't the slightest fault to find with you. Just how much I ought to charge myself with, I can't decide. This thing—this lack of accord—has got on my nerves, and I can't think right. I'm going away. I have some business in England, and when I have done that I'll go over onto the Continent, and lose myself for a while, and try to come back with a fresh perspective on these things. Perhaps we'll both be better for the separation. Have your mother come here, and your sisters. Be as happy as you can. I don't seem to be anything but a damper and you'll be better off without me——"

Lucile lifted her head.

"How long do you think you'll stay?"

"I can't tell," he answered. "Why?"

"Because if you stay *too* long, people will begin to talk," she said.

"I'll try to come back before they begin that," he assured her.

"Well," she agreed, "maybe it would be a good thing to do."



PART TWO



PART TWO

CHAPTER XIII

THE sunshine on the Lung' Arno was dazzling. In the shade of the covered passage connecting the Palazzo degli Uffizi with the Palazzo Pitti, Isolina Rossi sat by her basket of sugared buns which she vended to passers-by. Her near neighbours in trade were the present-day tenants of those botegas on the Ponte Vecchio where so many immortal Florentines learned the goldsmith's craft and then his art, before they essayed painting or sculpture. But worthier is Isolina as an heritor of the Golden Age, than are the tawdry keepers of those memorable shops now prostitute to pinchbeck "souvenirs." Not Leonardo's self, beautiful, buoyant, threading the streets of Florence in quest of a look worthy to transfix for all time, glimpsed aught more rare than Isolina's smile.

Who knows how old she is who wears that smile? Who knows if she is child or woman? If pain gave her that look of age, or gladness makes her seem so young? Her squat little figure suggests no deformity, although it contrasts oddly with the delicacy of her face.

More and more, as Florence opens page after page the story of her triumphant sadnesses, is one inclined to think that Isolina has been selling cakes there—never old and never young—since Dante passed and re-passed that spot, dreaming of Beatrice. Almost one is tempted to ask her if Dante ever stopped to chat with her; to speculate why Leonardo flashed by her, intent on the immortalisation of a smile more inscrutable than hers but far less spirituelle.

Crowds of chattering tourists, thankfully elate because

they had located in the Uffizi everything starred and double-starred by Baedeker, streamed by Isolina without a glance in her direction—hastening to buy mosaic brooches or cut-work coat collars before the inexorable hour of the pension déjeuner. Now and then a bloused workman, or an apprentice boy proudly wearing the insignia of his service, paused to outlay a copper soldo for one of her dust-blown dainties. But whether Isolina sat ignored, or bartered a cake for a penny, she was subtly suggestive to those who recognise and read miracles wherever encountered.

A butcher's boy, trundling uncovered meat in an open cart to the delectation of innumerable flies, tossed down two soldi, with the air of a gallant who reckes not what he spends. A man who observed, smiled reminiscently; and was lonelier even than before, when the gay adventurer disappeared in search of such other pleasantnesses as the delivery of meat need not interdict. And a woman who observed, smiled, too; for she was sure Benvenuto had been just such a lad.

Isolina, also, looking up from the safe-bestowal of the two soldi, smiled so radiantly that Stephen was fairly startled. Then he became aware that the little cake-vendour's beaming welcome was of some one immediately behind him. Leaving her basket, Isolina ran past Stephen, to give greeting. When Stephen saw to whom she gave it, he had an instant feeling that he, too, should smile a glad welcome at that lady. He even felt that the lady, though she had never seen him before, would understand. But he did not smile. He did not linger. He thought that courtesy obliged him to move on. He had not learned the genial Latin way of frank interest in other people's affairs and equally frank disregard of other people's interest in yours. The Italians in the vicinity gathered about Isolina and the signorina, hoping to witness some little incident of human comedy which might enliven their day and enrich their store of things to talk about. But the American with-

drew almost guiltily, fearful of overseeing something to which he was not bidden.

He loitered, though, before one of the shops on the Lung' Arno, and when the lady went on her way, he followed, keeping her in sight. Never before in his life had Stephen done such a thing—not even in his college days; but he was conscious, besides his feeling of shamefacedness, of only one other: he could not lose her.

Hard by the Ponte Santa Trinità, she passed within a doorway. A minute later Stephen, his heart beating furiously, was informed by the imposing-looking concierge—whom he had purchased almost body and soul for ten lira—that this was a pension most select; that the lady who had just entered was indeed a guest; and that it might be that the signora could make accommodation for the gentleman. Being a Latin, he perfectly understood the situation; and, being somewhat accustomed to Americans, he was not too puzzled by Stephen's manner—which was as if he thought no one had ever before been guilty of such behaviour.

It was even possible, the concierge suggested, that if the signor wished to assure himself of the excellence of cuisine for which this establishment was famous, he might remain for déjeuner.

Stephen remained. It was his first experience of a pension, and he found it rather an ordeal. The place seemed to abound in femininity; and he could not help knowing that his entrance into the dining-room created some little commotion and set some comment astir. He came very near backing out. But the lady he had followed suddenly looked up from her omelet, and regarded him with an expression which would have kept him there had the ordeal been one of flame.

After a month in England, Stephen had crossed to Paris where he spent a few disconsolate days. He hated Paris. The hotel to which some one he knew had directed him, was old and stuffy. It was centrally located; but the street

noises were deafening and sleep-defying. The food seemed to him far inferior to what he got in good American hotels. The plumbing was antiquated. The cab-drivers persisted in not understanding his directions. He was amazed at the trumpery look of the big "department stores." He hired a guide and "did" the night rounds in Montmartre, once; after which he decided that vice as indulged in at Nogales was scarce deserving of the name, being so wholesome and natural compared with what he saw in Montmartre. The next day he hired another cicerone and attacked the Louvre—where the perfunctory guide directed his attention to so many pictures he could not possibly like, that he grew too bewildered to select the few he might have enjoyed. He did indeed get a thrill at Napoleon's tomb. And to Notre Dame, although it interested him far less than Westminster Abbey, he paid tribute in awe. For the rest, he drove in the Bois without being able to think it half so lovely as Central Park; he went to the Opéra and compared it unfavourably with the Metropolitan; and he went to the Folies-Bergère which he was unable to compare with the Follies produced by Mr. Ziegfeld, because as he said there was no comparison. Also, he sat outside the Café de la Paix for a weary while without seeing any one he knew in the passing throngs. And he paid three francs to ascend to the third level of the Eiffel Tower.

After this, he turned his back unregretfully on the over-rated Capital of Pleasure, and took the night express for Rome.

In after years, when his love of Paris had become a pure passion, the most wonder-working influence in his life next to his love for a woman, he used to look back reflectively on those days of his first acquaintance with it. How parched his spirit had been, in the midst of those sweet fountains! How poor, in those Aladdin caves, for lack of the magic word to command their genii!

Rome gave him much more at first sight. He was far from getting her best; but even what he did get over-

whelmed him; made him feel that he must go away, so he could think about it all.

So he went thence to Florence, where he had been for two days when he came out of the Uffizi, one June noon-day, and followed a lady—walking where Dante's Beatrice had walked—into a New Life, a new world.

The sense of adventure Stephen had in moving from the Grand Hotel to the pension, was the greatest he had ever known.

He was not sure what the etiquette of continental boarding-houses was, being unacquainted even with their counterparts in his own country. But there was almost enough joy, for the present, in being where he could see the lady—whose name he learned was Miss Eleanor Atwell—and in feeling that the same roof sheltered them both. And he felt that for further developments he was only too glad to wait until they came in some ordinary course of events.

The most surprising thing about the whole affair was that Stephen was not at all surprised; he seemed somehow to take it for granted, as if he had always known he was going to step out of the Uffizi on the eighth of June and find that for which his whole life, thitherto, had been a quest.

The dining-room of the pension was one of the great state rooms of the old palazzo wherein the pension was lodged—a palazzo so old that it antedated dining-rooms and belonged to the period when food was served on trestle-tables; but doubtless many a splendid feast had been set therein, and many immortal Florentines and others had sat at meat here where now Stephen was directed to a place at a long table.

Miss Atwell, he had learned at *déjeuner*, did not sit at the long table, but at one of the smaller ones whereat persons sat who were permanent boarders or who preferred exclusiveness. But of this Stephen was glad rather than otherwise; it seemed as if he could scarcely have borne it, yet, to sit beside her, or facing her. He could see her,

though, from where he sat. Her table was just beyond the far side of his.

She seemed to be alone; those occupying the other seats at her table were evidently not relatives or friends, but mere acquaintances; when they came in, they at once began telling her their day's experience, and Stephen inferred that they had been following suggestions she had made for their sight-seeing.

Evidently she knew Florence well; Stephen had heard, before he moved out of earshot that morning, the fluent Italian in which she spoke to the little cake-vendour; she was probably not a fleeting tourist.

Other things evident about her were: that she looked to be perhaps twenty-seven or twenty-eight years of age; that she was a trifle under rather than over medium height in women; that she was delicately rather than slenderly made, with many tender, gracious lines of face and throat and bosom and figure. Her hair was a soft, fair brown, dressed with extreme simplicity but with such perfect regard for the contour of her face and head, that there was a classic beauty in her every aspect. Her eyes were what Dante called "that sweet colour of Oriental sapphire." Her skin was supremely beautiful, with a pearl-like translucence through which her pleasure, her enthusiasm, seemed to glow exquisitely. She dressed with dignified distinction. Her clothes had no air of having been assembled out of shops, but seemed to have grown for her, somewhere, to grace and to express her. The quality of her loveliness was not the kind that every one acclaims at first glance, nor even of the kind that every taste perceives on close acquaintance. But it was the kind that was instant in its appeal to Stephen. She looked, somehow, just as it seemed to him he had always known she would look.

There were other newcomers to the pension that day, arrived by the morning train from Rome. An American lady and her three young daughters were ushered to the seats opposite Stephen at table. The girls were sweet,

eager, abroad for the first time and not at all sure what they ought to see or do, but wistful not to "miss anything." Their mother seemed to have less idea even than they about foreign travel, and to be unnecessarily bewildered by its demands on her intelligence. She was a naturally home-keeping, dependent body who had torn herself quite fearfully from her familiar environment and from her husband's multifarious protection, to bring her girls to Europe for a "tour;" and who would be frankly relieved when it was safely over with.

They had escaped from Naples after one terror-filled day, without seeing anything but the view from the Bertolini terrace—although that is, in truth, worth journeying half 'round the world to see. In Rome they had spent a sedulously guided week going from the most modern of hotels to the most ancient of ruins, and back—dazed and weary—to the modern hotel where some one advised Nancy, the eldest girl, to try a pension in Florence and recommended this one. Mrs. Hatley was fearful—she had come to Italy in the same fearfulness wherewith she might have entered Thibet or Mesopotamia or Sarawak; there was no kind of violence or depredation which she did not expect from any and all Italians, whose principal associations in her mind were the vendetta and the Black Hand, along with vaguer recollections of Lucrezia Borgia, Catherine de' Medici, and perhaps Nero. But the girls were determined to live in a palazzo; and she was the kind of mother with whom girls invariably have their way.

They were bubbling with excitement when they came in to dinner.

"Oh, isn't it too wonderful?" Nancy gurgled, gazing up at the ceiling whereon the florid taste of the eighteenth century had set afloat some not-too-anatomical cherubs.

"I wonder," Ann Elizabeth murmured, rapturously, "if Dante ever ate here!" Ann Elizabeth was twelve; but she had heard of Dante.

"Or Michael Angelo!" Martha whispered, in an ecstasy.

Mrs. Hately's mind was unhappily busy with things people had told her about not drinking the Florence water for fear of typhoid and not eating salad for fear of cholera, and she was no party to her daughters' transports.

But Stephen could not help sharing them. He, too, felt strangely elate. And he was conscious of a sympathy with the girls on account of their mother's unresponsiveness.

Indeed, almost every one's attention was engaged by the Hatelys, so that Stephen felt comfortably unnoticed.

The girls were pretty young things—the eldest only seventeen—vivacious, interested in everything, sure that everybody liked them. The self-confidence which in far too many American girls becomes either pert or blasé, was in them tempered by much natural modesty and sweet, girlish charm.

In consequence of their excitement, and their inability to remember the kind of bottled water they had been advised to buy as being so much cheaper than *Fiuggi*, and of their dismay at having to decline the salad which smelled so good, and of many other things, they were among the last to finish dinner.

Coffee was served in the drawing-room, a strange, sepulchral apartment with a groined and vaulted ceiling decorated in deep cerulean blue with gilt stars in uncharted constellations. This roof had probably once been the glory of a private chapel or of a great *salle des gardes*; but various occupants in many centuries had wrought longitudinal as well as latitudinal changes, and more than half of the space originally beneath these vaults was now a store—with the result that the pension drawing-room gave its occupants the feeling of being almost too far up in the firmament. Perhaps that was why few of the household ever tarried long therein, and all were strangely constrained while tarrying. Coffee was drunk with an Olympian air; and it gave one a shock to see spinsterly persons crocheting bedspreads for their married nieces or to hear them comparing their influenza sufferings.

Stephen sat tentatively down near the door, half repelled and half attracted by the grotesqueness of this experience. But he had nothing to do; he was curious about this life he had adventured into; and he wanted to hear what those engaging girls would say about this extraordinary room.

They were very much awed; and Mrs. Hately, as she took her coffee from the tray Enrico handed round, looked as if she expected the *banditti* at any moment and was by no means sure that the smiling Enrico was not one of them.

At length she came who was the lady of Stephen's life-long quest, and sat shyly down beside Nancy.

"I couldn't help," she said beseechingly rather than graciously, "overhearing some of the things you said at the dinner table; and I just wanted to tell you that if I can be of any help to you about what to see in Florence, I hope you'll ask me. I know it pretty well. And I have such a feeling for what it could mean to girls like you, I'd hate to think of your going on without learning to love it so that you'll surely come back some day. You see, I used to teach girls in America about it; and I still have the impulse."

"Oh!" Nancy cried, "would you? I mean, would you tell us, a little, what to see. I've looked in Baedeker, and there's more than a hundred pages of things to see, and we haven't much time, and I just know we'll miss the most important ones!"

The other girls gathered as close as they could; and Mrs. Hately confided to her countrywoman some of her most harrowing fears.

Stephen could hear his Lady telling the wherefor of this strange apartment. He could hear the girls' eager questions about the days when this palazzo was in its glory. And he could not help overhearing her suggestion to them that they visit the Davanzati Palazzo which had recently been restored to its fourteenth century appearance.

"I think," she said, "it is one of the very best places to begin to know Florence. When you come out from there,

nearly everything seems so much more intimate and understandable. And it is only a stone's throw from here."

Stephen made a mental note of the Davanzati Palazzo. And then, really ashamed of eavesdropping, he took himself off—out onto the Lung' Arno, and across the Ponte della Trinità. He had never been so happy, nor so excited. He did not try to think what this ecstasy might lead to. Not one fibre of him resisted it.

CHAPTER XIV

STEPHEN did not know that the Hatelys would so closely follow his Lady's advice as to go to the restored palazzo first thing the next morning; and he did not know that as a result of the further talk after he went out of the star-vaulted drawing-room, his Lady had offered to take them thither.

He was up early, as his wont was, and had his coffee and rolls before eight o'clock, in a dining-room as yet uninvasioned by others of the household. Then he went out for a stroll.

Since his arrival in Florence he had dutifully inspected the Duomo, Baptistery, and Campanile; the Palazzo Vecchio; the Uffizi; and sundry streets whose names he did not know. He meant to visit the Pitti galleries; but the other sights commended by Baedeker did not allure. He had thought that one more day for Florence would suffice; and then, on to Venice.

That was yesterday, before noon. Here, less than a day later, he was sauntering through the narrow old streets with the air not of a tourist but of a resident, and really enjoying himself for the first time since he came to the Continent.

He wandered into the Mercato Nuovo, and threaded the busy streets of that ancient quarter, meeting so many of the loiterer's rewards that he marvelled why he had never sought them before.

Hunger dulls its victims to all but the gnawing of desire. Even the anticipation of food for his spirit's needs stimulated in Stephen a new responsiveness to many things.

At ten o'clock he was at the Davanzati Palazzo, waiting to be admitted. And while he stood in the great central

court or well, gazing about him curiously, he heard Ann Elizabeth's voice crying:

"Ooh! isn't it *creepy*?"

A moment later they were all beside him—his Lady and the four Hatelys.

Stephen's heart was behaving madly. He had indeed hoped for an encounter with the Hatelys that might lead in turn to a meeting with his Lady; but he was by no means prepared in his mind for this sudden finding of himself in her presence. Still less was he prepared for the readiness and simplicity of her recognition.

Her impulse to share anything pleasurable was so much stronger than her sense of constraint, that she might have spoken to Stephen had she been alone when she came upon him. He would have presented himself to her mind first as a human being groping for the key to an understanding of all that lay about him, and then as her fellow-citizen and a member of her household—all before she thought of him as a gentleman to whom she had not been introduced. But the presence with her of their four housemates precluded any possibility of hesitation.

She smiled welcomingly at him, and said: "Are you finding it interesting?" in the most natural and friendly way, though rather shyly, appealingly, than otherwise.

Stephen returned her smile for smile, but his was frankly wistful.

"I'm wishing," he answered, "that I knew something about it; the guide-book doesn't tell a thing except," he opened it where his finger marked the place, and read, "'a well-preserved castellated building of the 14th cent., with a picturesque court.'"

"There are custodian-guides on each floor," she said; "but their English is limited, and their enthusiasm is—well, it is all they can feel, perhaps, for the twenty-five centimes they expect. I have been here often. If I can be of any service——"

Her tone was so friendly that he could not feel her

courtesy wrung from her by his helplessness. He looked at Mrs. Hatelý, inquiringly.

"If I shall not seem an intruder," he murmured.

"Not at all," she responded, her sympathy aroused by his strangeness like her own in a strange land.

"My name is Stephen Bellas," he said. "I live in the wilderness of northern Mexico, and I have never been abroad before."

As the matron of the party, Mrs. Hatelý introduced Stephen to Miss Atwell and then to her three daughters.

They went up to the roof, first, and exclaimed at the beauty of the June-blue sky; the wisps of clouds floating in it like fragments of some goddess's veil; the billowy crests of the far Apennines and their near foothills; the glint of the tawny Arno as it flowed beneath storied bridges to Pisa and the sea; Giotto's Campanile, incomparable; Brunelleschi's awe-inspiring dome; the crenellations of the Palazzo Vecchio battlements and the lily-like tower high above them; the heights of San Miniato to which the cypress-bordered path leads up past ancient Stations of the Cross; the spire tips of dark stately trees above the grave of Elizabeth Browning; the roof of Santa Croce sheltering Michelangelo's dust, and Galileo's who brought close the stars not to Florence alone but through her to all the world.

Floor after floor they explored on their descent, each floor the quarters of one family in the patriarchal group these walls protected.

The girls were enchanted.

"It's just like being in a story-book!" Nancy declared. "Look, girls! Look at the funny nightgowns hanging by the grand bed. And oh! see the baby's cradle! Isn't it ducky? And here's where they washed. What a teeny basin!"

"Ooh-ee, look-ee!" Ann Elizabeth squealed, excitedly, "The table's all set for dinner."

The others followed her into the dining-room where the table did indeed seem as if, as Martha said, at any moment

the princes and princesses would come in and "wonder who these rubber-necks are."

"Martha!" her mother admonished. "I told you never to use that horrid, vulgar word again."

It was Nancy to whom the custodian disclosed the secret staircase in the thick wall, by which members of this rich and splendid household might make their escape if members of some other rich and splendid household succeeded in battering down the front door.

Nancy wanted to flee down the hidden stair and "see where it goes"; but her mother threatened to put all further castles on her black list, if the girls could not see them without going crazy.

Stephen wished he could have been here alone with Miss Atwell; he felt that she could have told him a hundred things he wanted to know; but he regarded himself as an intruder on this occasion planned for the girls, and he thought the least he could do in the circumstances was to be grateful for the chance to share in what she gave them, and not distract her from her purpose by asking questions whose answers the girls might find uninteresting.

But also he was much appealed to by her attitude toward those young persons. He had felt the dull unresponsiveness of their mother, anxious about many things but not the things their eager spirits craved; the pity of being young and ardent for thrills, and going through Italy at the leading-string of a woman wistful only to escape cholera and bandits and get home alive, smote him mightily—as, he knew, it had also smitten his Lady. He loved that in her which made her offer herself to three strange girls whose hunger appealed to her bounty as instantly as if it had been a hunger for bread.

That which was to have been expected, happened; Miss Atwell tried to tell the girls some things she thought they should not fail to see; and although they did not mean to impose on her good nature, they persuaded her to take

them to one of those places, then to another, and another. And Stephen went along.

On the second day of their sightseeing, the four persons who had been sitting at Miss Atwell's table went on their northward way and the Hatelys replaced them. There was a sixth seat, and Stephen was urged to take it.

He was very appreciative of the circumstance of this group, and not at all impatient because he never saw Miss Atwell alone; that would come, he was confident, when the Hatelys had resumed their flight. For the present he was more than content.

One day he took them all as his guests to Pisa. He found a good limousine touring car and an English-speaking chauffeur, and had a quite fabulous basket luncheon put up at Doney's.

The delights of that day made Stephen conclude a contract for that car and driver by the week.

The Hatelys were to leave on Sunday for Venice, and the girls were disconsolate at the thought of parting from Eleanor Atwell.

"If you can persuade her to go to Venice, I'll take you all in the car," Stephen whispered to Nancy.

Nancy could, and did. The real difficulty was to induce Mrs. Hately to forward her luggage by express.

"I don't expect ever to see it again," she murmured, after she had yielded and seen it go.

But no one was seriously perturbed by her plaining; although Stephen entertained, briefly, a grim reflection as he helped to bestow her comfortably in the best seat, which she accepted with the air of one who resigns herself to the inevitable. She gave nothing, at any time; she was merely something to bear with, another to feed, the first to grow tired and want things terminated. Yet she accepted the best of everything; and had no hesitancy in making her fears, her weariness, the measure by which five other persons must mete out their enjoyment.

"Beats all," Stephen reflected, "how they get away with it—thousands and tens of thousands of them!"

He could not even discover that Mrs. Hatcly felt any gratitude to Eleanor Atwell. The thing that Miss Atwell gave in giving herself, her enthusiasm, her knowledge and love of Italy, was intangible to Mrs. Hatcly, who probably thought—if she thought about it at all—that Eleanor was lonesome and eager to get acquainted.

They were off, passing the innumerable villas in the northern environs of Florence, at eight o'clock—skimming along smooth roads, beside sun-baked walls, up into the foothills and toward the Apennines. By ten o'clock their teeth were chattering in the stinging cold of the mountain pass. At noon they were in the drowsy, sunny piazzas of Bologna. There was time for a brief stop there, and for another at Ferrara. And they had their picnic luncheon on the grassy bank of the Po. At four they came to Padua, where they wandered till six-thirty, dined, and once again were off, for Mestre. Here they were awaited by a barca, or large gondola with two rowers which Stephen, on advice sought of Eleanor, had ordered by telegraph from the Grand Hotel.

It was after nine o'clock when they left the mainland and headed across the lagoons toward the Adriatic. The moon was nearing full, and they seemed to be gliding straight into it on a highway of silver sheen. At first, as they crossed the Laguna Viva toward the city, silhouetted blackly against the moon's white light, it was as if only they of all the world, of all their time, were voyaging thitherward. The infrequent Sunday night steamers between Venice and the mainland, were not in evidence; and for a while, as they approached the workaday western part of the city, wrapped in the blackness of warehouses by night, no other gondola than their own passed them, wraithlike, on the dark, silent water. Only the jeweled chain of lights on the long railroad bridge linked the mystery of that they were coming to, with the land of romance they had been travelling in all day.

Obedying orders from Eleanor, the rowers entered Venice by the Cannaregio and swung into the Grande Canal at a point beyond the glare and bustle of the railway terminal. In a moment they were on that most enchanting of all the world's highways, floating past great and storied palaces toward the Rialto.

No one said much. Eleanor asked the rowers not to call out the names of the palaces, and without any explanation from her they seemed to understand why. Also, she asked them to loiter near the singers' barges before going to the hotel. When they caught sight of the domes of San Marco, the fairy pinkness of the Doges' Palace, the crownéd columns of St. Mark and St. Theodore, and the soaring Campanile, Nancy hid her quivering face on Eleanor's shoulder.

"I think," she whispered, "I am going to cry."

But Stephen could not, for all that might have been held out to him, have commanded even so much utterance.

CHAPTER XV

COMING down from the Campanile observatory, the next day, there was need for some members of their party to wait another descent of the elevator, and Stephen in stepping back pulled Nancy back with him. (Mrs. Hately was sitting trepidately in the Piazza far below, or she would have created a commotion in the descending car.)

"Miss Nancy," Stephen began, his manner very nervous, but his grey eyes twinkling, "how would you like to—to be presented to the Queen, or—or *knighted* by the King—or—any little thing like that?"

"I wouldn't mind," she answered, laughing up at him understandingly.

"I'll see to it at once," he assured her. "And if your appreciation of the privilege should make you want to—do something for me—just to show your gratitude, you know——"

"I know!"

"What would you think of a—a kind of reunion of the Hately family—something exclusive—an Old Home Week, or First Settlers' Picnic—just for one afternoon or evening? That is, you know you don't have to let me hang around *all* the time. I shouldn't mind if there was something you'd rather do alone. You'd tell me—wouldn't you? It might be that Miss Atwell would be willing to burden herself with me alone—for once!"

Nancy slouched her lissome young body, drooped her head, and thrust her hands into imaginary pants' pockets—what she called her "best Bill Sykes pose"—and muttered hoarsely,

"Come on, Pard—let's plot and conspire."

"You plot," he replied, "and I'll conspire."

"Wait! *Leave* me think!"

She tapped her forehead meditatively.

"Ha!" she cried, presently. "I have it! Lace! Beads! Where was it that Miss Atwell said that we might go on an excursion steamer to an island where they make lace and another island where they make beads? Would you mind very much if you didn't see anybody make lace—or beads?"

"I would try to bear the loss of those delights," he promised.

Then the elevator returned, and they soon rejoined the three waiting within the Campanile below, so that Mrs. Hatelly might not suffer the shock of seeing them without Nancy.

It was not difficult for Nancy to manœuvre an opportunity for Stephen to make his request of Eleanor; but it was rather difficult for Stephen, when he found himself briefly alone with Miss Atwell, to ask her. The thing he wanted was not extraordinary except in his mind and for the importance he attached to it. Among six persons of such various ages and tastes, it was only the magnetism of Eleanor and every one's eagerness to be with her, that kept them from following the course of other travelling parties and "splitting up" frequently. But Stephen, reminding himself that Miss Atwell's interest in putting her love and knowledge of Italy at the service of the Hatelly girls might extend to him only as a sharer of their pleasures, was afraid to make to her a proposition which excluded them.

His mind was in a strange state regarding Eleanor. She filled his thoughts to the exclusion of everything else in the world save what was associated with her; and yet he had never once questioned himself as to what the outcome of this might be. He lived these days as if aphasia had cut off from him all his life before the brilliant noon-day when he came out of the Uffizi and saw the smile with

which Isolina's face lighted at the coming of Eleanor. And he lived them, too, as if there would be for him no morrows. He could not think. Every sentient atom in him was so taxed with feeling, that he had no energy for thought.

If, however, a close analysis could have been made of what he felt, in it there would have been discoverable no trace of hope that this was more than a very brief ecstasy. It would colour all his life, he knew; but only as a memory—as Alice had coloured the long grey road of his wayfaring hitherto.

He tried to seem casual as he broached the matter in hand, so that if she were averse to it she need not think it a thing of moment; but his effort was far from successful.

"Where is it," he began, "that you spoke of going to see lace made, and—and beads?"

She looked a little surprised for an instant, because the overanxiousness of his manner almost conveyed to her an impression that he was eager about the lace and beads; and she had not so read him. Perhaps he was tired of churches and pictures and birthplaces and such-like.

"To Burano and Murano?" she answered questioningly.

"Somewhere by steamer—on an excursion."

"Yes; I mentioned that trip, and the trip to Chioggia."

"What's there?"

"Nothing much, when you get there; it's the going and coming that count. The sail down the Laguna and back is lovely."

"I—I'd like that better than seeing lace," he pleaded.

Eleanor laughed.

"There's much more to the island trip than lace and glass factories," she replied. "You don't need to go into those at all."

"You see," he reminded her, "I've never been here before. I don't know what the chances are of my coming again—but I'm afraid to hope they're very good. It's all so wonderful to me, and I'm so ravenous for it, that I—well, I feel

like a rescued Arctic explorer when he gets where there is food—and I suspect that I act like a—like a glutton.”

“Lots of people have to gulp their Europe,” she said extenuatingly. “It’s too bad. But if it can’t be helped, what else can they do?”

He saw that he was making no headway at all, and he could not hope for a much longer separation from the Hatelys.

“What I’m trying to say, Miss Atwell,” he went on, hurrying, “is this: I’d like one recollection of this heavenly place to carry away with me, that was not just like the others—I mean, that was not keyed to those nice little girls and their mother. I like them awfully well—shall miss them terribly when they go on—and all that. But Venice is so—I can’t say it—only there can’t be anything quite like it; I daresay that all the rest of my life I shall be wondering if Heaven is as beautiful. Could there be one day, or part of a day, or evening, or any time, when you’d be willing to take me to some lovely place and bear me company while I just soak my soul full of it? I thought that maybe while they looked at lace, I might—you might go with me some place that they really wouldn’t care so much about—you know——”

“I know,” she affirmed, softly.

“You don’t think me unwarrantably selfish?”

“No. I think you have been royally generous to us all.”

He winced.

“I wouldn’t like you to oblige me for that reason,” he expostulated.

“I hadn’t thought of it as obliging you,” she answered, simply. Stephen wished she would go on to say how she had thought of it; but she didn’t.

“Suppose,” he suggested, “you wanted to help a very appreciative somebody have the most idyllic Venetian day you could think of. What would you suggest?”

“Well,” she replied, thoughtfully, “that would depend on several things.”

"Such as——?"

"Such as, frankly, *expense*—for one thing."

"Forget it. Plan as if you had Aladdin's ring."

Her eyes shone with excitement at the free rein given her imagination.

"Shall I tell it all to you, or just help you come upon it?" she asked.

"Just take me adventuring with you. Plan the most enchanting day you can possibly think out. Don't buy me a palazzo if you can manage without. But short of that, let money serve you as if you owned a treasure cave—I own several, and they will probably never again buy me anything so perfect as this Venetian day."

At ten the next morning, when the Hatelys had been started in the direction of the Salizzada San Moisè with its fascinating shops and its direct route to the Piazza, a trig little motor launch appeared at the landing-steps of the hotel, a lunch hamper and some fairly warm wraps for evening on the water were stowed away, and under a gay little awning Stephen and Miss Atwell made themselves luxuriously comfortable in wicker arm-chairs with bright chintz cushions.

"There are lots of folkse," she said, as they started off, "who'd scoff at a Venetian day in a motor-boat. But it's the only way we could do the things I've planned—and much as I love the gondola, I haven't the kind of mind that cannot feel any romance in this darting little thing like a swift-flying bird. Have you?"

"I never felt so thrilly and adventuresome in my life," he replied in a tone so full of joyousness that she laughed delightedly.

"The only drawback to our boatie," she went on, "is that it cannot go in some of the narrow waterways where many of the best 'picture-bits' are. But we'll see what we can. I thought we'd get the colour of Venice in our minds, as much of it as we can, in this brilliant sunlight. It's all so

utterly, incredibly, unearthly beautiful! Let's move up forward where there's nothing over our heads but this marvellous sky. Did you ever see such a blue blueness? But wait till eight o'clock this evening, and you'll swear you never saw blue before."

"Go through here as slowly as you can, please," she said in Italian to the motor-man. "We don't want to make any stops or go in any place—just to get the loveliest colourings."

"Fancy," she remarked to Stephen, "telling an American cabby or taxi-driver to take you to the choicest beauty-spots! It is, of course, this man's business to know Venice—to know the places in it that people like to see. But I can't help honouring him because he knows his business so well, and because he probably feels as much pride in Venice as if he had driven every pile it's built on, and with his own hands wrought all her beauty. I appreciate why there must be so much unrest in democracy, and I try not to hate 'growing pains.' But oh! there's something very soothing in getting away from our country where nearly everybody thinks himself so superior to his job; and coming over here where multitudes of the people one meets in daily life are dignified in their own eyes and in their neighbours' by the *way* they do their work, not by the kind of work they do; and where people care for beautiful things because they appreciate them and not just to own and flaunt them."

"Look!" Stephen cried. "Oh, it's maddening to go by like a flash. Where are we going, that we should leave this behind?"

"I know," she assented. "But don't scold me till the day's over. You can come through these byways to-morrow in a gondola, and spend all the time you wish. You don't need any commodore for a voyage like that. But the day I've planned is one that you might not lay out for yourself until you had been here some little time."

"I apologise for seeming rebellious," he said, "But this that we're seeing now is so beautiful that I can't imagine

anything beyond it. What manner of men can they have been who dreamed of doing things like these? Of houses the colour of a pink rose, draped in blossoming wistaria! Of houses orange and umber and terra cotta——”

“See the dancing shadows of those leaves and branches on that old, weathered stucco wall,” she urged; “and try to think how much less lovely it would be if those splashes of terra cotta brick were not showing where the plaster has scaled off.”

It was noon when they reached Torcello and transferred themselves and their lunch hamper from the launch to a mongrel sort of gondola which could navigate the shallow old canal.

Stephen wondered, but quite within himself, at her choice of this desert marsh for their first stop. He was not particularly impressed with the churches and baptistery, except by their great age, and a little by the arrangement of the tribuna in the cathedral. And he climbed the steep, dark stairs of the Campanile obediently rather than with zest. But when he had reached the observatory, he began at once to realise why they had come.

“Somewhere, in a poem, whose name I do not know,” Eleanor said when she could speak without panting from her climb, “James Whitcomb Riley has some lines that run like this:

‘God’s grace! I know not any place
So fair as this.
Swung here betwixt the blue
Of sea and sky——’

That’s all I know of it. But I think that when you’ve gone back home, there’ll be times and times and times when you’ll think of this old bell tower, ‘swung here betwixt the blue of sea and sky,’ and nothing else in all the world but a vast stillness and a few crumbling memorials of a far, far past.”

They stood up there for half an hour or more, and spoke

seldom. But an awesome thing happened that speech might have held at bay: Stephen knew—not fully as he was to know, but so that never again could he deny it to himself—that all he cared most for in time and in eternity was there beside him in that ancient tower by the sea.

At luncheon, which they ate from the hamper set in the lush grass about the stone seat called Attila's, they were very quiet; but it was the quiet not of gravity so much as of content too deep for expression.

Over them, the wide reaches of blue heaven; around them, on every hand, the storied islands of a sapphire sea; close about them, the few remains of an vanished city whose dawn and noon and sunset lie shrouded in the night of those Dark Ages which the Germanic hordes brought upon struggling civilisation; in their hearts not a faintest foreboding of that twentieth-century swarming of the Huns, only two years distant.

When they had finished their meal, they made as neat a disposal as they could of the remainders and beckoned to a "second table" sundry small Torcellians whose picturesque isolation on this island of long-dead yesterday is so grotesquely invaded at times by steamer-loads of chattering excursionists.

"What must they think of life?" Eleanor wondered aloud. "How primitive it can be for them here, or how dreamful if they incline that way! Perhaps they have never been to Venice, or anywhere but in this eighth-century somnolence. Perhaps the only reminders they ever have that there is another sort of world than this, are the strange creatures shrilling unknown tongues who land here in a flock three summer afternoons each week, and gaze and stare for thirty minutes, then fly noisily back to the puffing, tooting thing that brought them. Look at that largest boy! Raffaello would have painted him as a youthful St. John Baptist."

"Can't you," Stephen suggested, "ask John the Baptist what he thinks of life?"

Eleanor hesitated.

"I couldn't," she pleaded. "Perhaps I'm foolish; but the dignity of a child's soul awes me very much. I wouldn't like to ask you what you think of life; but if I did, you would probably excuse me if I seemed impertinent. They are so—so alone—each little dreamer a solitary in his own world—shy, inarticulate, and—and always on the defensive; we make them so by our unwarranted attacks upon their secret treasures."

His eyes filled; the present blurred; in a mist he saw himself a little lad again, buffeted by circumstance but hugging in his bosom the expectancy of all he meant to do: treasure caves and Indians, adventure, conquest, riches. How they who saw in him only the hard-working farm boy or machine-shop toiler, would have laughed had he told them what he meant to do!

"Of course you can't!" he assented, humbly apologetic. "I should have known that, at least as well as you—for I was a dreaming urchin, once—'shy, inarticulate—always on the defensive.'"

Her silence was somehow always full of sympathy; it was as if, while she hesitated to urge him to further confidence, she would be glad if he were so inclined.

"I'd like," he murmured, "if you don't mind, to tell you a little about it. You have been exceedingly kind to me. I think you might like to know just enough about me so you may realise how much your kindness means."

"I'd love to hear," she assured him. "How would you like to walk back along the canal to our 'yacht,' instead of having that ancient boatman return us as we came? Or do you like to talk as you walk? If you don't, we'll stay here, or wait till we're on our way again."

"I'd enjoy the walk, if you would," he said. "And think how cruel it would be to linger here and keep those youngsters from their feast!"

So, as they strolled along the narrow path that bordered the canal, he told her, shyly, of his unmothered early years, and of Alice, and of the tragedy; described to her the

nights in farmhouse attic chambers, under low, sloping eaves, when he lay under a 'comf'table' of turkey-red calico or of patchwork, and read by the forbidden light of candle or glass lamp, about Aztec temples with steps of solid silver, and gold mines, and treasure caves.

"And one day you went to look for them?" she prompted when she felt him halting in his narrative.

"Yes."

"And found them?"

"Yes."

"And—and here you are!"

He had gone as far, evidently, in the narrative as was pleasurable to him; whether this was because he could not bring himself to speak of his achievements as he spoke of his desires, or because there was that in the realisation which he did not like to recall, she could not tell. While she tried to think what to say so that she might not seem to urge or pry, nor yet to shut off his confidences if he were not through, he answered her.

"And here I am! And you are making me see how many kinds of treasure life holds. Irving and Prescott and Wallace never thrilled my imagination more than you have, I can assure you. You have turned the key to a new world for me. My gratitude is beyond words."

They had reached the launch, and after the break in their talk occasioned by settling themselves and getting off, he showed no desire to resume the personal tone.

"I don't know," he said, gazing back at Torcello as long as the Campanile remained in view, "how I can ever thank you for that memory."

"I thought you'd like it," she replied, happily. "And I knew I would!"

The journey to Chioggia occupied about two hours; hugging the inner shore of the long, narrow reef which lies between the Adriatic and the Laguna, they loitered past the little toy towns set along that strip of land as inad-

vertently as if they had not perched there for much longer than a thousand years.

Beyond the fringe of sea-wall, fortifications, and gay townlets, the sea was at all times visible; and as they neared Chioggia it became alive with brilliant-hued sails like gorgeous butterflies, dipping and bobbing, grouping and dispersing, and suggesting some sumptuous carnival far more than the evening home-coming of the fishing fleet. Hundreds of half-remembered pictures came suddenly and vividly into the beholders' minds. Art seemed to have escaped from the narrow confines of gilt frames in picture galleries, and to have become one with life, to fill the universe.

"I have the most amazing feeling," Stephen gasped, "I'm sure I can't explain it—but—but beauty isn't a thing apart, any more—nor splendour—nor poetry. All the world, hereabouts, is bursting with the opulence of them. I have gone into a land behind the looking-glass where dreams come true and—and more than true!"

She nodded assent, but did not speak.

They roamed around Chioggia for a half-hour or so, specially delighting in the primitive rope-walk, hard by the main street, where they picked up again the flavour of a human endeavour untouched by changeful centuries.

The return voyage was a hundred-fold lovelier than the going down. Gold and sapphire glinted and glowed until they set the sky and sea aflame and mocked the vividness of the belatedest home-winged butterflies. The cloud-capped spires and crenellated palace roofs of cities that never were on land or sea, hovered mirage-like above, not a desert, but towns no whit less fair, no less incredible. It was as if their Venetian day, departing into eternity, had left open behind her the gates of pearl, and they were gazing upon the jasper and agate and chalcedony of the Apocalypse.

Presently, they were on the upper terrace of the Excelsior Palace on the Lido, facing seaward where, out of the still

depths of the Adriatic the moon rose into a sky the deepest sapphire that Stephen had ever seen.

They ate dinner there, and it was an excellent one—but if it had been otherwise they would not have known.

Then they sought their little craft and sat, silent, in her bow while she skimmed the dark water toward the shining, jewelled city, the bride of the sea.

At the Ponte della Paglia, hard by the Bridge of Sighs, they transferred to a gondola and directed the gondolier to point his prow toward the Giudecca Canal, where forests of masts uphold all manner of strange rigging from those uttermost ports keeping commerce with Venetia.

"These sailing ships from all the world, are no small part of the Venice that I love," Eleanor said. "I spend hours on hours here, especially at night when these far-faring birds seem to be sleeping, heads under sheltering wings. The pictures that they make are no more or less entrancing than the stories that they tell. Now, shall we go back by the Grande Canal, or this way that we came?"

"Please choose," he begged. "I am not able to."

So, by a *rio* which cut across almost directly opposite their hotel, they made the short last stage of their voyage. They could hear the serenaders, off the Punta della Salute; their voices, singing *Santa Lucia*, were wafted to them as they crossed the Grande Canal.

CHAPTER XVI

NOTHING had ever been said about the return to Florence. Stephen did not know whether Miss Atwell would be willing to make it with him, or whether she would feel that she ought to go back by train; and he had carefully avoided raising the question, hoping for some turn of events that might settle it, and fearful lest in some way—before events had been given their fair chance—Mrs. Hately might intervene and urge Eleanor to return alone. He was sure he knew how Mrs. Hately felt about it. After a day's acquaintance with Mrs. Hately one could be sure how she would feel about anything. Probably she was by no means assured, yet, that Stephen was not really the secret agent of the banditti—or a United States customs spy!

This latter spectre had been added to her gallery of dread, by the whispering of some countrywomen of hers with whom she got in conversation on the island trip. Pursuant to their sage advice, she cautioned the girls to say nothing about the number of bead necklaces they had bought, at one franc fifty each, nor on any account to mention her investment in fifty francs' worth of point duchesse—which she meant to “smuggle.”

“Not even to Miss Atwell,” she insisted. “She’s very pleasant, but you never can tell. They’re snooping around everywhere—and she has taken us to a lot of shops and—and lured us on to buy.”

“Why, Mother!” Nancy cried indignantly. “How can you say things like that? It would be just as reasonable if Miss Atwell were to think you were a spy.”

Mrs. Hately stiffened resentfully. “Not at all,” she retorted. “Did I attach myself to her and take her around to shops and places? What do we know about her? She

might be any kind of an adventuress—for all we know. I'm glad we're separating ourselves from her. People tell me you can't be too careful, over here, who you get acquainted with."

Like most stodgy parents, she resented her children's susceptibility to charm in others. That there could be a kinship between spirits was incomprehensible to her. Not to prefer "blood relations" before all others, and not to find in them satisfaction for all intimate desires, was evidence to her mind of moral laxity. Her girls' response to Eleanor Atwell's vivifying personality, filled her with vague alarms about baleful fascinations and home-destroying influence. She was one of the multitude of women who utterly confound reproduction with motherhood, and who hold themselves magically complete because their wombs have brought forth young. That there was more maternity in one hour of Eleanor's yearning to pass on the torch that lights life's way, than in a whole lifetime of her own beclouding caution, would have seemed to her an idea blasphemous and damnable.

She felt that Eleanor's going on an all-day excursion with Mr. Bellas somehow substantiated the charge that she was adventurous; and when Eleanor admitted that she was expecting to ride back to Florence in the car with Stephen, Mrs. Hatley's feelings wavered between indignation at the association she and her girls had suffered such persons to have with them, and secret gladness that at last the girls must realise how much better off they would be going their own way without entanglements.

She did, however, accept conveyance to the railway station of herself, her three daughters, and their multitudinous luggage, in a motor launch that Stephen hired; and also she suffered Eleanor to register the luggage through to Milan, and to find comfortable seats in the train for them.

Then they parted, the girls reflecting just enough of their mother's distrust to make Eleanor wince, sensitively. She was very quiet, returning to the launch to resume their

interrupted journey to Mestre; and Stephen felt a fervour of indignant resentment exceeding any he had ever known. The crassness of some persons toward himself had never greatly irritated him; he had always been too preoccupied to notice it much, and too fearful of the weakness of self-pity to allow himself contemplation of what seemed injustice to him or ingratitude. But that Eleanor should have been hurt by a mindless, heartless, soulless parasite like Mrs. Hatelly, made him rage and long to strike blow for unmerited blow in her behalf.

"I wonder," he sneered, when he had helped Eleanor to her seat in the launch and they were off toward the Can-naregio, "who will register that luggage at Milan?"

Eleanor smiled.

"Don't worry," she entreated, "there will be some one to do it—there always is; and it won't be a hotel porter, either—for that would entail the expenditure of a couple of francs."

"I hope," Stephen went on, savagely, "you noticed how warmly she thanked you for your interest, your services."

"And you for your generosity! I did notice—of course. As far as she is concerned I am neither surprised nor regretful; but I can't help being sorry about the girls. I'll never see them again, but they'll remember me, in a way. I wanted it to be a sweet and helpful way, and I tried hard to make it such. But she has dropped some of her poison in their young minds. How hideous it is! We shall be, presently, in Este and in Ferrara, associated with Lucretia Borgia; her name, in all the centuries, reeks foul of poison crimes. Yet her poisons did not touch her victims' souls. Women like Mrs. Hatelly seem far wickeder to me, because they blight the faith and eagerness of young spirits that God gave into their care."

"Perhaps," he ventured, to see what she would say, "all would have been well if I had not begged you to take me on that argosy of ours, nor offered you a flight over the

mountains to Florence instead of letting you go back by train through those forty tunnels you told me about."

"Perhaps," she granted. "I daresay it is sometimes possible to comply with all the regulations that parasites may make for the terms on which we are permitted to serve them. But my experience has been that as soon as we have surrendered our right to think or choose for ourselves in one particular, they are ready with a fresh demand that we surrender something else. Complete enslavement seems to be their price for what they call peace. Mrs. Hately would have accepted from me in addition to my services, absolute negation of my own code and assumption of hers; that I could do a thing differently than she would have had me do it, and honestly believe that I was right in so doing, is beyond her mental elasticity. The great problem of life for many persons I know is, how far Mrs. Hately's kind should be defied. And the fact that the strong souls of every generation have struggled, each in his turn, with that selfsame problem without helping much to solve it for others, makes the situation wonderfully interesting, I think."

Stephen loved the way the keen edge of her satire cut cleanly and true, ruthless of hypocrisies but careful of untainted areas as a surgeon. Nothing about her suggested that type of mind which, having discovered the rottenness of a part, is permeated with a suspicion of the whole. Her incisiveness was remedial, not vengeful nor reckless.

He was glad she resented Mrs. Hately's behaviour; and doubly glad that she was candid in expressing her resentment. A man could come to a sense of comradeship with such a woman! He would know how to find her, mentally and spiritually. Her saintship in his eyes would be a matter not of her discreet evasions, but of the sheer integrity of her emotions. The effect on him of Lucile's sort of femininity was like that of heavy, cloying perfume in a close room, on a man who loves the breath of Heaven blowing across wide spaces of clean earth; it drugged and sickened him. It could not be that the enchantment of sex

was inseparable from deceit! Certainly, if he knew his own soul, it was not the courtesan's charms that he was anhungered for; it was companioning that he desired—his hand held fast in that of one whose eager feet outran his own in quest of beautiful adventure.

Everything that Eleanor Atwell said or did seemed to deepen Stephen's sense of at-homeness with her. When that day's ride was ended and they were back in Florence, he could have sworn that he had known her not only all his life but in other lives, far back, clear to the world's first dawn and night rounding out the world's first day. But also he could believe that he should never be done wondering at her fresh revelations of their eternal kinship—not till the stars grow cold in the flush of unending morning.

At Mestre, their car was waiting for them. Stephen explained, briefly, to the chauffeur that the other members of the party had gone on by train to Verona and Milan, and that he and Miss Atwell wanted to get back to Florence at as reasonable an hour as was possible.

He wondered if this man had any doubt of Eleanor's integrity; and his mind, sensitive on that point, even gave lodgment to a fear for what the pension tongues might say. He felt that he could not endure to have any one unconvinced of her high dignity. Dante's state of mind when, rather than have his Lady's identity suspected, he sacrificed another woman's security from clacking tongues by using her as a screen or shield, was now become Stephen's. He had at hand no one to sacrifice; but it is doubtful if he would have hesitated at anything which might, to his mind, have served his Lady's honour.

He wanted to know how she felt about it; and it did not occur to him to refrain from asking her.

"I'm thinking," he began, as they bowled along toward Padua, "that in going back with me, unchaperoned, you may be misjudged by others of Mrs. Hatley's ilk. I'm sure you've thought of it, too; and that you feel it is all right, or you wouldn't have come. I'm sure you know how I feel

about it. My deep sense of your integrity and of my own was all I thought about, at first—that, and the delight of the journey. But if you think any one who ought to honour you is likely to misunderstand, I hope you'll let me put you on the train at Padua. If your generosity to me puts you where—where gnats can bite you, I—I shall be very unhappy."

"I'm glad you mentioned this," Eleanor said. "It is so much better to understand each other—not to have to wonder what the other thinks. I'm not as old as Methusaleh—but I've lived a good deal in twenty-seven years, because I was taught to face things as they came, and not to defer thinking about them until some later day. If you don't mind, I'd like to tell you a little about myself, and why I am over here, alone, with only my own judgment to depend on.

"My mother's father was a professor of Greek—one of the grand old men of the teaching profession, a personality of the sort we don't seem to grow, nowadays. I could tell you stories of him for a thousand and one nights—everything he did made a story, somehow; he was so much of an individual and not a type. Among other things, he had a way of making all his estimates of persons according to standards of his own. You might be in all the Peerages and Blue Books, but unless you had other things to commend you to him, he never gave—like Marjorie Fleming's turkey—'a single damn.' And you might be in all the rogues' galleries of the known world, and not be debarred thereby from his affections and high esteem, if he felt that in you which seemed to him lovable or estimable. And as he had a sort of touchstone for values in people, he had also a sort of measuring conscience for conduct—he was so concerned with trying to satisfy his own ideal of what was right, that he had very little time left to think about satisfying other people. Yet they loved him and were helped by him—oh! very, very much—because they felt, even the dullest of them, that he was going true to an inner

voice which—which was a very good voice to follow. Sometimes his inner voice didn't remind him to put on his collar or tie, and frequently it failed to tell him when to stop going—so that he would almost have girdled the globe on his way home, if no one had intervened. When I was a very little girl, I learned, by a kind of absorption rather than instruction, not to be mortified by my grandfather's small oddities, but to be very proud of his beautiful truthfulness and kindnesses.

"My mother was a great favourite in the college town. She had many admirers. My father was a lecturer and writer on the history of art. He had a beautiful and most interesting mind, and he and my mother loved each other ardently, devotedly.

"When I was six and my two brothers were mere toddlers, we came abroad for two years, so father could study and write among the things he loved so well. I learned French then, and Italian; and I began to learn a little about the beauty that our world is full of.

"We stayed four years instead of two. It was an enchanting childhood. Then we went back to America—and when I was twelve, my dear father died. Mother took us to Grandfather's. We were terribly lonesome for my father—he had been such a comrade to us all; but the life there was very stimulating and fine—it was a delightful place to grow up in. Lots of people, all about us, had personalities—were cut according to many patterns, not all of them fashionable at the time. I am grateful for this, as I am grateful for the snowy hills, and the ice on our lovely lake, and the flowery glades where all the fairies dwelt, and the glory of autumn woods. As I look back on my childhood and early youth I can think of few kinds of poetry, of fine, healthy sentiment, that were not plentiful in it. Grandfather's library, with my father's added to it, made a world of books from which little was lacking. My memory is hung with pictures of it—the intoxicating sense of romance and adventure I used to have even standing in

the midst of so many mysterious volumes and wondering where I would go exploring next; the glowing, hard-coal fire in the grate, and the radiance in its near vicinity of the shaded-reading lamp; the uncut leaves of *Harper's Monthly*, and *Scribner's* and *The Century*—oh! yes; and of *The Atlantic* when it was publishing 'To Have and To Hold!'

"To have been a hearty, happy girl, coming in from two hours flying over the ice, in that clear, crisp cold, and finding in that glowing library the just-come copy of *The Atlantic* with fresh chapters of that entrancing story! I thrill at every recollection of it.

"In due course I went to college—to Vassar; and there also my cup of happiness was running over, for four beautiful years, and I came under the influence of many lovely women who left the impress of their rich natures on my heart and mind.

"It was the year after my graduation that a great change came. One of my mother's old admirers came back to college for the silver jubilee reunion of his class. He had never married, and was a handsome, successful, charming man just past his mid-forties. His home had been in California for years—at Pasadena, where he was a much-courted eligible. He danced and swam and golfed and rode and played tennis, and had never in his life, I think, considered himself middle-aged. His social affiliations were all with young, gay, active people. But when he saw my dear little mother again in the old places where he had known her and loved her in his early youth, he felt that all he truly cared for in the world was her companionship. He courted her quite wonderfully—flowers, notes, candy, books of poems, long walks, tender trysts—all the romance of the grande passion. Mother was hungry for it. She is one of those women in whom the heart of youth never dies.

"And so they were married, and went away to live among flowers and orange groves. My brothers stayed on

to finish their courses at college, and lived with Grandfather. And I got a position to teach."

She paused. A listener less in sympathy might have thought she had said all she meant to say. But Stephen knew she was gathering courage to go on—to tell that to which all that she had told was but a prelude. He waited in silence; but she could feel the deference, the comprehension he did not know how to express.

"My first long vacation," she resumed, presently, "I went out to California to visit my mother and my step-father. They gave me a royal time. The next summer I went again. And my step-father did all he could to persuade me to stay out there—if not to live with them, at least to teach somewhere nearby, so I could go home to them often.

"He is one of the truest gentlemen and finest men I ever knew. My mother worships him, and he worships her. But there are many phases of his life—active, youthful phases—into which she did not fit. She doesn't dance or swim or ride or golf or play tennis. Her habit of thinking of herself was as a widow with three grown children. His habit of thinking of himself was as a blithe bachelor. In time, she will adapt herself to as many of his ways as she can, and he will care more and more for her ways. But it was quite clear to me that if they were to be happy as they should be, there ought not to be a grown daughter in their ménage—one who loves all those activities for which her mother no longer cares. I—I don't need to say any more; do I?"

"No," he assured her, gently.

"You have not inferred that my step-father was in love with me, or I with him?"

"No."

"I simply wanted to leave them as free as the best of lovers need to be when they are growing together in that unity of interest and desire which makes marriage. And I couldn't tell them why I did not stay; it would have hurt them terribly. So, the next summer I came abroad, bring-

ing three girls from my class. And after our return, Grandfather died, the old home was broken up, my brothers were in business—one in Chicago and one in Rochester—and I made up my mind to come over here and study for a year or two. I have enough to do this, if I am careful. And—and here I am, as you said of yourself.

"I wanted to explain to you why I feel that I may make for myself decisions that are based on my own intuitions and understanding, even if they do not accord with Mrs. Hately's. All my life I have been encouraged and helped to do just this; and to be concerned first of all with what I think is right, and after that with what people are likely to say about me. It isn't that I think the accepted ways too narrow for me, or anything like that. It is just that I don't travel an accepted way merely because it is popular—only if I feel that it is the right way for me.

"I ought to have known better—but I thought that after a week of such intimate association as this past one, Mrs. Hately would feel that in me which would give her absolute confidence in my dignity of purpose. Am I to cringe and cower and conform, because she cannot trust me? I wish I knew! In my mind this ride over the mountains with a chivalrous gentleman, is as innocent a pleasure as any little boy-and-girl outing of my youth. I know the Latin people can't understand it—nor the Hately Americans. And it may be that when I am where people don't know me, my first duty is to avoid getting myself talked about. What do you think?"

"I'm not a worldly-wise person," he answered; "and I've got a lot to learn; I haven't had much need, thus far, to think about such things. Life is quite simple in my part of the world. Many men—of the sort who habitually think of their relations to women in a—in a gallant sort of way—would not believe there could be a chap so—so simple as I am. This morning when I saw Mrs. Hately's behaviour, and afterwards when it seemed to me the chauffeur had a kind of knowing look, I began to wonder if I should have

let you come. But—honestly!—before that I thought only of how pleasant the return ride would be because we should be so much quieter than we were coming up, and better able to reflect about things.”

“But now?” she pursued, wistfully. Her deference to his opinion; the candour and the sweetness of her; her evident faith in his chivalry—all these moved him profoundly.

“And now,” he replied, “I seem to have but one thought; and that is, that I would rather do almost anything I can think of, than have you misjudged even by a chauffeur or a crew of reputation-wreckers in a boarding-house. We can’t pick up a chaperone. I could take the train from Padua or Ferrara or Bologna, and send you back over the mountains in the car. But I’m not willing to have you go alone with a chauffeur we know nothing about——”

“Put me on the train at Bologna!” she cried. “And before leaving, I’ll telegraph Madame to send the porter to the station to meet me—it will be late. I’m not afraid—but it seems you can’t satisfy some folks unless you pretend you are.”

“But won’t she wonder why you wire from Bologna?” he objected.

“Why, no! I might have forgotten to at Venice—mightn’t I? Oh! aren’t we the wicked plotters?”

She was smiling as gaily as a prankish child. But in a moment she was grave again.

“And isn’t it,” she went on, warmly, “a burning shame for innocence to be on the defensive—to have to resort to deceit and subterfuge, because some people in the world can’t believe in decency?”

“It is!” he agreed, rather savagely.

“Well,” she urged, “now that we’ve taken up our whole golden morning, so far, with considering the serpent and his ways, I move that we do something to protect ourselves from his further intrusion between here and Bologna. What do you do in the wilderness to keep snakes off while you’re encamped?”

"We lay a barrier all about us of leather thongs or whips or reins—anything so long as it's animal hide; and they won't cross that."

"I wish," she murmured, wistfully, "I knew the equivalent for that in the case of human serpents. But, anyway, let's refuse to think any more about 'em until we reach Bologna. We've made our concession. And I'm sure the worst thing we can do is to brood over it until it spoils our whole day. Let's be clean-heartedly glad, all the rest of the way. 'The lark's on the wing, the snail's on the thorn,' morning's at more than seven and the hillsides are no longer dew-pearled, but I'm sure God's in his Heaven and it's a mighty nice world."

CHAPTER XVII

THE hissing of poison tongues had its sweet uses, like other kinds of adversity. Being jointly on the defensive bound Stephen and Eleanor together more closely than a round of serene pleasures could have done. They were both deeply interested in the psychology of their effort—in its effect on themselves more than its effect upon others.

Stephen cancelled his arrangement for the use of the car and the services of the chauffeur he had found so satisfactory and hired from another garage when he wanted to ride in the environs of Florence.

"Isn't it strange," he commented to Eleanor, "that I should do this, just as if I had done very wrong? I am as uncomfortable with that fellow, now, because I can't hope to make him believe how right we were, and are, as I could be if we had been grossly wicked and he knew it. Your taking the train at Bologna to placate the gossips here, gave him an impression that we were—well, furtive about something."

They both disliked evasions and all uncandidness; but there was, notwithstanding, a sense of adventure in the situation that appealed to the child-heart in them.

Stephen was like a long-caged creature briefly set free. He had no other expectation than that he would return, presently, to his bondage; and his determination to enjoy the interval was the stronger therefor.

He was not reckless of his Lady's feelings; it simply did not occur to him that he could leave a void in her life when he went away. She seemed so fabulously opulent, to him, in all that provides interest and creates charm, that it was inconceivable that he could mean more to her than a casual guest at the table of her great bounty. She would

always have guests in abundance, he was sure; but never again would he sit at such a feast of all that his soul craved.

Not even to himself did he admit that he loved her—only, that she had irradiated for him all of life and given a new significance to him for all eternity. He knew he should think of her longingly until he died, and that Heaven for him would be any place where he could find her; yet he believed he could go back to Lucile and make shift, somehow, to serve out his bond with her—because divorce and infidelity and desertion were terms not in his lexicon.

Dutifully, once a week, he wrote to Lucile and told her he was well and enjoying his trip, and was glad to hear she was so pleased with Los Angeles. And once a week he received a "Darling-Honey-Boy" letter from her, written in her sprawling hand, unpunctuated, strangely spelled, and gurgling with news of her social advances and Eileen's beauty and her popularity at children's parties. The sight of Lucile's handwriting on a lavender envelope heavy with scent, gave him a sickish feeling, even before he glanced through the rather stereotyped contents. He wrote his reply immediately, mailed it, and tore up her letter—then tried not to think about her any more for another week.

He did not try to analyse his reluctance to tell Eleanor of his bonds; he thought that, not having mentioned them at first, it would be awkward to do so now, and unnecessary. If her kindness to him was as casual as he thought he wanted to believe, he should have argued that she would be no less kind to a married than to an unmarried countryman of hers in a strange land. But he was not trying the case at the bar of his conscience. He was, rather, like a boy who fully expects to be whipped for having gone in swimming, but is trying to enjoy the swim so much that it will be worth a licking.

The days in Florence following their return from Venice, were like leaves out of the heart of hearts of all romance.

Stephen did not need to feel that Miss Atwell was de-

voting herself to him—he was accompanying her on her studies; that was all. And she was studying not Florentine art alone, but all Florence as an expression of art incomparable.

"There is something in the mental and spiritual atmosphere of this place," she said, "that works like an alchemy; things become golden and precious, here, as by some sort of magic. Above all, personalities have always flourished in Florence more than in any other city the world has ever known. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could learn the secret of that? It isn't because Florence is so much more beautiful than any other city; nor because she has been so much gentler and more kind. But she has a fairy gift of charm. She's like an exquisite woman who has that in her which brings out the best in all her many admirers. Other women are cleverer than she and others are handsomer, but none is so well-beloved—because in her presence all graces blossom as they have never done elsewhere. Of course the lady's not going to tell us how she does it! But I'm here to see if I can't discover her lovely magic. What a secret that would be, to carry back to America and teach to girls in those years when they are so ardent to find the romance of femininity!"

"Don't they all want to be New Women, now?" he quizzed. "Don't they kind of look down on old-fashioned charms?"

"They all want to feel their potency," she answered. "That is the natural demand of every soul. I'm glad they scorn the kind of lady-likeness which used to scream at spiders and swoon at a finger-prick, and confound ignorance with innocence and uselessness with gentleness. If, in escaping from that zenana state, they have got too boisterously assertive, I suppose we ought not to be much surprised.

"I'm heretical about women's rights, because I think we've always had about as many as we truly desired, and

when we were in bondage it was not to men's conscious tyranny so much as to our own notions of expediency.

"The natural woman, willing to do her full share of the world's work, had the situation in her own hands—once. I incline to believe she yielded it, quite as much as it was taken from her."

"Why should she do that?"

"I wish I knew! Perhaps because she was very foolish—perhaps because she was very wise—perhaps because she was neither wise nor foolish, but only less strong than circumstance. I hardly dare to hope that I shall ever find out; but it's mighty interesting to try. This is the most thrilling time to be alive in that ever, ever, ever was! Our New World has done so much to bring great things to pass! And yet we need this Old World so, to help us understand! I'm trying to get a clearer vision of some things, here, so that I may, perhaps, be able to set before others what has been shown me in a revelation."

"Will you teach night-school, too, please—for horny-headed labouring men like me?"

"Perhaps!" she promised, gaily.

"Try a lesson on me now," he pleaded.

They had been in the Pitti Galleries; and now, they were in the Boboli Garden, among its marbles and cypresses and plashing fountains.

"I'm not ready to teach yet," she demurred; "I have so much to learn. I'd rather ask you questions about your Indians. There are some survivals, among them, I'm told, of the old matriarchal rule. Suppose I tell you, as briefly as I can, what I'm trying to work out—and then you'll know better what to tell me of the primitive life you've known and I've only heard about?"

"Suppose you do," he urged, eagerly.

"Well," she began—and hesitated. Her reluctance to seem didactic was very real. Her upbringing had been free from the intellectual snobbery too common in academic circles. She had been well taught as an appraiser

of worth, and she knew that here was a man of uncommon character and power, an idealist who had been able to realise many of his ideals, a man of parts able to express his aspirations in clean-cut, constructive action. To her this was not less but more thrilling than a corresponding ability to express ideality on canvas or in stone or in printed theory. Not what Stephen had told her but what she had read into the lapses in his narratives, made her respect for his achievement profound. The fact that in Italy, among traditions and objects she had been from infancy taught to appreciate, she was on her vantage ground, did not cause her to forget that in another land where the ability to appreciate does little for the man who cannot conquer and create, Stephen was a chieftain or king. She was far from rating her proficiency above his. And yet, his eager attitude toward the treasures of her experience was irresistibly appealing to her; not only because of the charm of his personality and the pleasure of ministering to his delight, but because this relationship between them was so interesting an attestation of what she called her "pet theory."

He smiled at her as she sat, hesitant, beside him.

"Well?" he echoed. He was perfectly aware of the reason for her reluctance. Her ways of expressing her respect for his accomplishments were many and not easy to define, but he felt the effect if he could not describe the method; in her presence he was always more of a man in his own eyes than he ever was until she made him realise the dignity of his achievement. She was like Florence as she had characterised it; and whether her magic was alchemy, which makes gold, or that of the touchstone which discovers hidden preciousness, the result was that she brought out the best, not in everybody but in those persons who yielded themselves to her charm.

"I am not sensitive, dear Lady," he said, earnestly. "With others I might be, but not with you—you are so gracious. I am just out of the wilderness. I had a hard

youth, and my struggles, since, have not left me much time for the pursuit of the things you are familiar with. I'm ashamed to impose on your good-nature as I do—or I would be, if you weren't so wonderful at not letting your bounty seem like alms. I'm a beggar—but the way you hand things I'm starved for out to me, you make me feel like a king. Don't be afraid of getting too elemental for me. Think—if it will make you any more at ease in your own mind—of where I might have to begin with you if you wanted to locate a gold mine!"

"You are most encouraging," she said, gratefully. "Now, this is the line of thought I am working along, though what will develop out of it all I cannot guess yet. There has been a great deal of assertion, lately, of woman as an individual, as an independent economic factor, as a citizen, and so on; all very needful, but not all that we need to remember and to prove. I believe with all my heart that women should be highly-developed individuals, citizens, and—if possible—economically independent. But I contend that in all these things they must have another aim than their own self-sufficiency; for I dare to believe that we are, at least equally with men and perhaps even a little more than they, the guardians of the spiritual treasure of the race.

"There is something very loathsome to me in the kind of parasitism so many women live in to-day. There was never a time in history, I should say, when so many women ate unearned bread—and that in spite of the millions recently admitted to economic independence. The balance is brought down by the many millions in the other scale who are not producers in any sort—for whom the evolution of mechanics and economics has wrought emancipation from their old labours, but in whom the eagerness to improve life has taken the strange twist of wanting rather to make life more uselessly elaborate and expensive and—and unproductive.

"The fervour for independence is short-lived in most

women—it is bound to be—there are in nearly all of us opposing instincts so much stronger—instincts to mate and become mothers and mistresses of homes. Of the girls I shall teach, many will adventure for a few years in some sort of 'self-expression,' self-dependence. Then, sooner or later, as youth's necessary assertiveness gives place to maturity, the wonderful, world-old yearning will come to them—the yearning to hand on the torch of life, to bear and nurture, and to share these divine ecstasies with a man greatly beloved and loving.

"The message I want to carry to those girls is that romance and exaltation, to be sustained, must have foundations well-laid. And it isn't easy to lay them well in our modern conditions. Husbands and wives have too little community of interests in these days when their respective labours are so different.

"Living in a man's house and spending his money and even bearing and raising his children, isn't an honest partnership with him unless there's more in it for him than he could possibly get elsewhere for the same money and effort and devotion.

"Women usually run their homes at least as much to suit themselves as to suit their husbands; they do not so frequently now as formerly bear children unless they want to; they give less companionship to their men than women used to do who worked harder and lived more simply.

"A man can buy himself in open market to-day ten thousand comforts that men in other generations had to get at the hands of their womenfolk or not at all. In fact, there is practically nothing that a man can't buy himself to-day except those things which are most essential to his soul. Of body comforts and luxuries, most men could have far more in singleness than they can hope to get when they share with a family.

"The family must be worth its ever-increasing cost—or society will have to be made over. Men no longer beget children to swell the war strength of the tribe, nor

to bring the unpaid labour of many hands into the service of the paternal home or business. Children are desired, now, for the happiness they only can create. And wives likewise!

"But if our modern woman, weary of foraging with the pack, unsatisfied with the free life and its chances, wants to pitch a permanent shelter beside some spring of sweet water, in a defensible and plentiful spot, she must not expect her hunter to come home, with his quarry, from a far hillside, unless she has taught him to expect that of her which no other women in a nearer home could give him.

"This should be a less tremendous task to-day than it once was. For as life grows more and more complex, full, various, spiritual demands become more infinitely diversified. When men had but two kinds of hunger, it must have been an undertaking indeed to satisfy those in a way no other woman could successfully compete against! But to-day there are so many combinations and arrangements of so many, many desires. Hardly any one is satisfied merely to sustain life and be warm, clothed, fed, and defended from his enemies. Education of the masses of people everywhere has set stirring millions of aspirations. Our problem, now, seems to be to seek out those whose yearnings mate with our own—doesn't it?

"You patient, much-enduring man! Shall we move on? Would you like to go to Casa Guidi, where the Brownings lived? And afterwards, toward sunset, up to the Piazzale Michelangelo?"

"Think," she said later, when they were in the rooms below those the Brownings had occupied in Casa Guidi, and which are accessible by reason of being used for commercial purposes, "think what that frail, plain little Englishwoman was able to give to that handsome, sturdy, brilliant man six years her junior! And 'other heights in other lives, God willing!'

'Oh, I must feel your brain prompt mine,
Your heart anticipate my heart,
You must be just before, in fine,
See and make me see, for your part,
New depths of the divine!'

He coaxed from her one bit after another of those lines her memory held from the many poems in which Robert Browning celebrated what she whom he loved had been to him. And as they talked, they walked about the San Felice quarter the Brownings more than all others have enshrined for the whole world.

Presently, they hailed one of the delightful little phaetons which serve in Florence as public cabs, and Eleanor told the driver to take them to Bellosguardo, where "Aurora Leigh" made a home for herself and Marian and Marian's unfathered child, and whither Romney Leigh came, blind and penitent, into the great riches of Aurora's chastened love.

Returning thence to the Porta Romana, they followed the Viale dei Colli's winding way up to those heights where they could wander at will while waiting for the opening of eternity's great gates to receive within them this dying day.

Michelangelo's fortifications interested Stephen greatly; not as engineering alone but as that for which the mighty master laid down palette and chisel and architect's draughting-board, to serve and save Florence.

"I grudge those months," Eleanor said. "Each unfinished work of his I look on, I wonder if that might not have been wrought nearer to his desire had he not perched here for all-but a year, defending Florence against the Emperor—who took it, anyway! It seems to me that it was of so much less moment who ruled Florence than what Michelangelo put into Florence to make it great."

"But if he loved the Republic," Stephen objected, "and hated to see it swallowed up in the greedy schemes of

Charles the Fifth, how could he paint or sculp or plan when the liberties of Florence were at stake? Could a man be a great artist who was not above all a patriot?"

"He worked just at greatly," Eleanor averred, "after the Emperor became Florence's liege-lord——"

"Ah, but he had done what he could against it!" Stephen cried. "That is the thing a man must do—or perish."

How soon all the world would be debating this, they could not know, but Eleanor continued to shake her head over the waste of war, as they toiled on, up to San Miniato which has been looking down on Florence since long, long before Dante climbed these heights and here sat down to meditate.

On the Piazzale, when they returned to it, they found an expectant assemblage of whom they felt it good to be a part. If less colourful than the usual sunset group on the Pincian, it was no less variously composed. Soldiers and clericals; artists and artisans; Florentines who never grew cold to these splendours and tourists as yet unacquainted with them; mothers and nurses with very young children; romping youngsters of adolescent years; aged men and women, and infirm—all these were there, gathered along the balustrade. And another group there was: girls uniformly dressed in black; black sailor hats on their neatly braided hair; black capes about their narrow young shoulders; two by two they walked, sedately, and with them two brown-robed nuns, guiding the steps of those unseeing ones and trying to describe to them the beauty spread around them and below.

"What a responsibility!" Eleanor murmured, watching the group out of mistful eyes. "Those children with the sealed eyes think of the world they live in only as those kind nuns are able to describe it to them. And yet—I wonder what we, with our sight, would see, were it not for the vision of those who have taught us where to look and what to look at!"

High above them towered the colossal bronze of Michel-

angelo's "David," silhouetted black against the glowing sky and seeming higher than the Apennines which bend their shoulders eternally behind the immortal youth. Across the silver river, beneath Santa Croce's roof, the venerated dust lay of that most world-weary old, old man whose joy in young manhood's beauty had given this triumphant David to mankind.

Standing above Florence, as any day of her history passes into eternity, one thinks first of all of how many memorials to their undying love of her, her citizens and her guests have been privileged to leave in that fair city after their spirits took flight to the city not made with hands. Every bit of love her beauty has inspired, is somehow enshrined there still—if not the actual masterpiece, at least the memory of its accomplishment. She treasures every token of her admirers, that gracious lady whose head is never so turned with adoration that she does not happily disclose all her best charms to each eager new lover.

Then, wondrously, the city that was and is, seems like a lovely antechamber of the City that ever shall be. Arno, on her way to Pisa and the Ligurian Sea, becomes a street of pure gold passing betwixt walls of jacinth and beryl and amethyst and emerald to that great glory where God sits enthroned above the praising cherubim.

Silently they watch, who line the terrace brim, each heart aware of its own wistfulness.

Next, Arno is a blood-red way, remindful of the path to glory and the heart's desire.

The stillness grows the more profound.

Red fades to rose, then pearly pink. The purple mountains drape themselves in vapoury veils of such shades as arbutus wears. Lily-like towers blush in the presence of so much majesty. And pointed cypresses bristle like spear points advancing on heaven's battlements.

The pregnant moments pass and no one counts them. Then, in a sky coloured like the lining of the deep sea's

loveliest shell, in a pin-prick of starlight another world shines through—another. And above the downy tree-tops of the Cascine, the crescent moon hovers, reluctant, like all young things, to go to bed.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE pension dinner hour takes no account of late June sunsets and the going-to-bed of very young moons. Soup is at seven, and spaghetti soon thereafter, and the wight who comes at seven-twenty begins his dinner with some variety of those fatted calves which Italy so numerously slays. Even hotels are martinets in the matter of meals, and make no allowance for the ten thousand temptations to loiter and linger on the way thereto, that Italy presents.

The world was steely-blue when Stephen and Eleanor turned from the Piazzale's balustrade; and they were almost alone on the great terrace. Lines of lights were bursting like pale cereus blooms in the warm, velvety dusk along Arno's quays, and casting their reflections on Arno's dark, shining shield. The shops lining the Ponte Vecchio twinkled gaily. Florence, her daily bread earned, was ready for laughter and wine and love.

No word had passed between those two on the terrace, for many minutes—no speech to mar the subtler revelation each was receiving.

It was Eleanor who spoke first, taking refuge in the commonplace because her intuition so directed her.

"Are you hungry?" she asked, gently as one speaks to a child that must be wakened.

"Yes," he replied, shortly; then, after a brief pause, added, "but not for dinner in a pension."

"We are late for that," Eleanor averred, unregretfully.

"Have I kept you here too long?" he entreated. "I never thought! Perhaps you were—are—tired?"

"I am not tired," she assured him, quietly; "and I haven't the slightest desire to hear the fat woman from Omaha

demand to know 'why these people put cheese in everything,' or the man from Providence tell what he paid for leather card-cases."

"There ought," Stephen declared, rather savagely, "to be some way from this to—to earth again, that's not a tumble, but a—a descent. I'm not sure that any one should wish to go back—it's like having been to Heaven on a visit. If I could, by staying here until the gates open again, slip in, I'd be a—glad and—grateful man."

The heart-break in his voice was expression of no moment's mood, she knew.

"Ah, no!" she whispered, pleadingly. "We must not be afraid to go down from the mountain where we have—have seen God. It is not for ourselves alone he gives us—this. We have much to do with it before we may ask entrance to Paradise."

She knew his love for her; not though he had sung it in many cantos and all the winds had whispered it for nigh upon a thousand years, could she have felt more certain in her knowledge. And her response to it she knew also. Why he did not try to tell her, she did not understand—but was content to wait.

"Where," he demanded, abruptly, "can we go to get a bite to eat?"

"We can try the restaurant up here," she suggested. "I can't guarantee a good dinner, but I don't mind if you don't."

She would have loved this truancy if he had not seemed so out of tune. But she reflected that great exaltation frequently reacts in profound depression, and thought it might be no more than the necessity for readjustment that vexed him. So she measured her tender gaiety, that it might not taunt nor irritate him, and was companionably quiet at their simple and not very tempting repast.

After they were through they went home in a little phaeton cab behind a horse whose jingling bell seemed to Stephen to make an awful din in the quiet night.

At the door of their pension he asked, "Do you mind going in alone? I think I'll walk about for a bit before I turn in. You've been so good to me—I can't tell you."

She had laid her hand in the one he held out to her and tried not to wince at the grip in which he held it for a moment. Then she turned from him and went in, heavy of heart because of a foreboding she could not define.

Stephen walked along the Arno in the direction of the Cascine. He was conscious of but one desire, and that was to walk, and walk, and walk until he dropped of exhaustion and died among strangers who did not know his name. This he desired because he felt that he must get away from here; and because away from here there was nothing for him in all this weary world.

In the morning, early, he would take train for somewhere—if his wish never to see morning were not granted him—and start to live out "the time of his debt" in those waste places where she was not. *Montezuma* seemed like the faint, teasing memories of a long-previous incarnation; Lucile and the rococo bungalow, like horrors once lived through. He could not command his mind to any contemplation of return to them. He felt sundered from all that was past, cast loose upon a future that could be like naught but the crawling, unvarying years of a life sentence, a living death.

And what of her? What havoc had he wrought in her life, so rich in noble purposes? He put from him indignantly the suggestion of his defensive self that perhaps she did not specially care for him. To believe that the companionship she had given him was only such as she might have given any appreciative fellow-traveller, were to insult her with a charge of spiritual promiscuity as gross, applied to her delicacy and dignity of soul, as a charge of physical promiscuity against a woman less fine. His faith in the restorative power of her soul did not mitigate his suffering for that which he had done to her.

"Other men fleeing unendurable fetters," he reminded himself, mercilessly, "disport themselves with the daughters of joy; they're better than you, with all your 'moral rectitude,' because the women in whom they seek distraction are women who offer themselves for that purpose—at a price. Many of them would not stoop to what you have done. Only the lowest thieves are so dead to honour that they will steal from their benefactors. But you have stolen away the peace of mind of a woman of infinite goodness. And now you stand likely to kill her faith in men—so that hereafter she will fear to be kind."

His self-reprobaton knew no limits. Over and over and over again he arraigned himself at the bar of his awakened conscience, and hurled more and more scathing charges against his weakness, his wantonness, his sickening cowardice and false pretence.

Where he walked, he never knew, nor how far, nor yet how many hours. But when he became dully conscious of fatigue in which the ache of his body was great enough to share, briefly, his sense of the agony in his mind, he was on the Ponte Santa Trinità—halted, near the centre of it, within a stone's throw of his lodging and hers. The city was very quiet, and most of its lights were out. So many of its humming sounds were hushed, that the tinkle of a cab-horse's bell came far on the night's stillness, and the *clopf, clopf*, of hoofbeats on the stone-paved streets struck on the ear as if the Pale Rider were passing by.

The current beneath the bridge's middle span was swift, and dark. Stephen had no definite intention of any sort, but he was vaguely conscious of what surcease from pain there might be beneath the swirling waters. Or, no! not from pain; a man would bear pain uncomplainingly. From self-loathing, rather, and from that drear road of longing-never-to-be-satisfied.

Suddenly, without having heard a footfall, he felt a hand laid on his own, and heard a voice close to his ear say, softly, "Don't do it!"

He turned his head and saw beside him one evidently of the sad sisterhood.

Somehow, he had no impulse to shake off her grasp; the mercy in it was beyond all possibility of being misread for importunity.

"I wasn't going to," he replied, defensively.

"Maybe not," she agreed; "but I thought I wouldn't take a chance. I know the signs so well—and you had 'em."

"Signs of what?"

"Of wantin' to do it—of thinkin' what's the use of anythin' else."

"Have I got them?"

"You had 'em."

"You think better of me now?"

"I hope better," she replied, simply.

He could not see her very well, but her accent was unmistakably English and her voice was still fresh, her inflections those of a girl not the commonest. She might have been from Piccadilly or Leicester Square.

"I appreciate your kindness," he said, sincerely. "You, too, seem far from home."

"I am," she answered. "And I know how it feels to be desperate in a strange land. If I felt bad in London and got to lookin' kind of longin' at old Thames, a lot of things would clutch at me to hold me back. Such queer things! You wouldn't think they'd matter—but they did! I'd think of Piccadilly Circus on a spring day when the old women that sit 'round the fountain steps with their big baskets of flowers to sell, had heaps of yellow jonquils—and how I'd never see 'em any more. I'd think how Big Ben booms out when you're goin' home, late, over Westminster Bridge, and I'd never hear him again if I was in the mud beneath it. And all around me there'd be people who had weathered through tough times, I knew, and I could do as much. But here, you don't belong, you don't understand—nothin' matters to you—you'd just as soon be through. I know!"

"Why don't you—go back?" he ventured.

She had withdrawn her hand from his arm, and now she seemed to hold herself a little stiffly aloof.

"Are you," she began, "one o' those who—who like to think they don't know?"

"I am not," he protested. "I come from a frontier mining camp. Does that tell you anything?"

"It does. I'm sorry! But every now an' then we meet with one of them 'why-do-you-lead-this-dreadful-life' brothers. I hate them!"

She was vehement in her tone and gesture.

"What right has any man to be walkin' around loose who don't know better than to talk like that? This is no new business—and I never heard of any one that was in it for any reason that isn't as old as time."

"I didn't mean my question that way," he contended. "I meant, why live in Italy and not in England where—where Big Ben is, and the flowers in Piccadilly Circus."

"Because I'm here lookin' for some one who—who——" She faltered.

"I understand," he said, reverently.

"You give me a start when I first saw you," she went on. "Every man that's tall an' slim an' English-lookin', does. I oughtn't to have come, I s'pose. He was tryin' to break away from me. Some people'd say that if I really cared for him I'd let him go. They can't understand. Can you?"

She seemed determined to probe his understandingness—as if it could matter to her what he could comprehend.

"I think I can," he answered.

"But you don't care to talk it over—with me," she said, dryly. "Think I ain't much of a confessor, maybe! I'm no Catholic; but I can tell you that I've looked longingly at them confessionals o' theirs, many times, wishin' I had some one to tell my troubles to. But I don't want to tell 'em to no saint! Nor to one who pretends to be! I want to tell mine to some one that's been in hell, like I have—like I *am*—an' can say 'I know, child—I know.'"

"But that wouldn't be helping you, would it?" he queried.

"Wouldn't it, though? What more would I want? Can anybody tell me what to *do*?"

"Then why confess?"

She made an impatient gesture.

"I might have known!" she cried. "You're one o' them that keeps things locked up tight—one o' them that run, like he did—as if that settled anythin'!"

He started; her touch, accidental or canny, on his hurt, made him wince.

"There are some things," he demurred, "that talk can't help."

"You mean death?" she asked, speaking the word softly.

"No; I mean other things. Death isn't the worst——"

"Not for you, it ain't," she agreed; "but for them that 're left behind it's the hardest, because there's nothin' they can do about it—not one bloomin' thing! There ain't anythin' else that nothin' can be done about—not that I know of! At least, you needn't give up until you've tried all you know and all you think you'll ever know. That's why I'm here, lookin' up and down Italy and sellin' myself as I go along, for a man I can't live without. You got to make yer fight, if you believe there's any right in what you want, I say."

Flashing back to Stephen's consciousness came, in strong contrast to this girl of the night and yet in stranger consonance with her, certain things Eleanor had told him, at the Riccardi Palazzo, about a statue and a bust, and a poet who cried:

"Let a man contend to the uttermost
For his life's set prize, be it what it will!

. . . the sin I impute to each frustrate ghost
Is—the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,
Though the end in sight was a vice, I say."

Had he, perhaps, a right to contend? His sense of what he owed Eleanor—the only reparation he thought he could

make to her—had completely overshadowed all consideration of what he might owe to himself.

"I am married," he said, plunging quickly into his revelation, lest, hesitating, he lose courage for it. "It was a mistake, from the very beginning. I came over to try to get myself in hand. And here I have met and loved the most wonderful woman in the whole world. She does not know I am married. And I have never told her of my love. I thought I owed it to her to go away without saying anything."

"Do you think she loves you?"

"I think she does—a little; maybe much."

"Oh, you fool!" There was a sob of hysteria in her fiercely chiding cry. "Why do women love men who are so dumb?"

She took hold of him with both her hands and shook him—not gently.

"Promise me you will tell her!" she demanded. "I can't do much in this world for good women—but if I can make you do that, maybe one o' them'll bless me. Promise!"

"I promise," he said, humbly. "And I'll tell her—about you. I don't know whether she'll agree that you were right; but I know she'll be grateful for your intention—as I am."

"Maybe," she said, wistfully, "if things work out, somehow, for you, and her, it'll count for me—a little—against—the worst in me?"

"I'm sure it will," he assented, gravely.

A moment later she was gone, his young confessor of the quiet night streets; and he was facing toward his lodging, comforted in a degree surprising to him, by his resolution to tell Eleanor his love.

They had planned to go up to Vallombrosa to-morrow, and spend the mid-day hours in the forest. There, in the columned aisles of those great trees, he would entreat forgiveness of his Lady, and guidance. He rather wondered, now, that he could have thought of doing otherwise.

The early dawn was breaking when he fell asleep; and it was nine o'clock when he appeared for rolls and coffee in the dining-room. Eleanor was not there, and for this Stephen was glad. He had ordered a luncheon at Doney's, the day before; and the car was to come at ten. Stephen hoped that whatever ravages of mental anxiety he showed might escape her eye at least until the little bustle of getting off was through and they were alone together in the tonneau.

The road which used to take a carriage and pair full five hours for its traversing, is covered by motor at leisurely speed in less than two hours' time.

Stephen was quiet on the journey; but if Eleanor felt any lack in him of that eagerness which gave their expeditions all the thrill of voyages in quest of treasure, she made no comment thereon.

She also was given to silences—sometimes abstracted, sometimes the inexpression of a content too serene for words—and knew how to respect them in others.

Here and there she dropped a murmuring remark which he could without offence take as directed to him or leave as sort of spoken self-communion.

Stephen, unwilling to seem distraught, answered in kind, a little more amply than necessity demanded; and occasionally remarked some roadside incident.

At length they were come to the monastery, where three monks now keep alight the sacred fires of nine hundred years, and young men studying forestry sleep in the cells and eat in the refectory of by-gone days as dead in Italy as those "autumnal leaves that strew the brooks in Val-lombrosa."

The hotel hard by the monastery has made an annex or dependence of the hermitage which, from two hundred feet higher up the mountain, commands a superb view. "Il Paradisino" they call it—the Little Paradise. Not yet opened for the summer season, it was a blessedly quiet Paradise, guarded only by a shy, kind girl who was not without understanding, it seemed, of lovers. She proffered

cool milk for their luncheon, and they accepted, gratefully, although they had cold Fiuggi water in one thermos bottle, and hot café au lait in another.

The chauffeur, dismissed for several hours, with his own repast, probably shared his town delicacies with the reverent mountain lass, and may have had her assistance in picking the big bunch of forget-me-nots with which he returned Florenceward at eventime.

After a brief exploration, Stephen and Eleanor decided on a spot for their forest spread, which they inevitably compared with their luncheon at Torcello.

The exhilaration in this air was unlike anything they had known. Perhaps it is explainable because, besides being the breath of the Apennines blowing through the spiciest evergreens, it is air that poets have breathed and loved and celebrated for centuries. Then, too, it is not from many mountain solitudes that one looks down upon the like of Florence whose red duomo roof swims in the valley's golden haze like a pink lotus in a sun-flecked pool.

Straight and tall and slim and unbranching to great height, in the beauty Gothic builders echoed in stone, the trees stretched all around them in illimitable aisles. Triforium and clerestory rivalled Amiens in the sheer flight of slender pillars before upspringing arches began to vault the nave. And on the hard brown-earth floor, such spots of sunshine lay as come through high, jewelled windows and make fleeting mosaic on knee-worn stones.

As at Torcello, nothing obtruded to mar the perfectness; and earth was "crammed with Heaven," as she had said whose memory is one of those the place enshrines.

Eleanor made pretty play of their "meal in Paradise"—reverent, but not solemn.

"I can think," she said, "of a thousand things it would be pleasant to 'pretend' here; but, nice as they all are—and it does one lots of good, at times, I think, to get away, mentally, for a while from his own personality and point

of view—I seem to imagine nothing nicer than just *being me*, in Vallombrosa.”

There was about her, indeed, the air of tender content that love lays about sweet women. Stephen was a modest man, and saw no reason why she should have joy in him; but he knew she had. And his feeling, as he watched her, was such as Abraham may have had who took all that was his pride and hope, his boy, up onto a mountain to slay him.

“I wonder,” he began, miserably, “if I ought to spoil so heavenly a spot for you with what I have to tell you.”

The startled look in her eyes was too much for him to bear, and he hid his face in his hands, bowing low like the penitent he was.

“Have to tell me?” she echoed, faintly.

“Yes. I can’t hope that you will understand—if you are able to forgive me it will be only because you are so good. Miss Atwell, I am a married man—I have a wife and child—I didn’t mean to deceive you—I just drifted into it—it was only yesterday—on the Piazzale—that I realised it might make any difference to you. Perhaps it doesn’t. Perhaps I presume. I only know that I am the most miserable of men—not on account of what I suffer, chiefly, but for having seemed to—to betray your trust in me.”

She was still, for what seemed to him a very long time. He dared not lift his eyes to look at her.

Then she came closer to him and laid her hand entreatingly on his bowed shoulders.

“Please,” she whispered, “tell me more than this—try to make me understand. I—I can’t bear to know only this much!”

He obeyed her. In broken sentences, desperately, he rehearsed the story, as he could, uttering no word of complaint against Lucile and yet conveying, somehow, the sense of her to Eleanor’s keen mind.

“Do you think she—loves you?”

“I think,” Stephen answered, “that she thinks she does—in a way. Poor girl! she hasn’t an idea of what love means.

Maybe she never could know. But maybe she could, and has bartered her birthright for a mess of lace, and society notices. She may curse me, some day. I didn't know how hideous it was until I met you. I knew it was unfortunate, uncomfortable—but I didn't know it was a sacrilege."

"And the little girl?"

"She's mine—my flesh and blood—I don't feel it, but I try to realise it. I want to do my best for her—and for her mother, too. I'm not of the breed that deserts or shirks. I daresay I shall get through, in some fashion—it doesn't matter how soon. I've been taken up and shown the Promised Land—and told I may never enter in. Can the rest of my way in the wilderness be too short? Not for me! But I'm puling about myself—I loathe it! Other men, better men, have suffered the same anguish. I daresay I can bear it. It's you I'm thinking of. Your life is so sweet and rich and helpful. I've come into it like a thief, and stolen something I can't pay you for—your confidence, your kindness."

She hushed him.

"Come for a walk," she said. "Don't try to talk—you're hysterical. See if we can't get some of the calm of this place into us. We must have our best selves with us when we discuss this."

Her voice was steady—how she made it so she never knew—and had due effect on him. Obediently he walked beside her, up brown paths slippery with bronze pine needles and strewn with cones—beneath sweet balsam roofing them from the blue mid-day sky.

After they had gone on thus, silently, for perhaps half an hour, he motioned to a place that invited to rest and said:

"May I talk now? I think I can be a little rational about it."

"I'm sure you can," she assented, quietly.

He was conscious of an unexpressed something in her which calmed him and gave him courage—as if she still believed the best of him.

"Before you begin," she interposed, "I just want to say this: One of the many great, perplexed souls whose worship here before us makes this place sacred, wrote

'How is it under our control
To love or not to love?'

I'm sure it isn't. But I hope it is under our control *how* we shall do it. Blaming yourself isn't going to get you anywhere. Now, then——!"

He wanted to tell her how wonderful he thought her, but he had a feeling that she divined that, and that there were other things she was more anxious to know.

"It isn't loving you that I blame myself for," he protested; "nor for the way I do it. Not only do I worship you with everything that is best in me, but it seems to me that all that 'best' came into being only when I knew and loved you. What I blame myself for is having accepted your friendship on a—a misrepresentation—under false pretence——"

"I know how you feel about that," she assented; "and I regret it—for your sake. It was so unnecessary, too! At least, I think it was. Perhaps if you had mentioned your marriage at the very outset, it might have made some difference—I don't know. Certainly it would not have seemed any reason why I should not help you to enjoy Florence. I could never have stood off from that simple, human kindness because I was afraid you might fall in love with me. That's *too* absurd! And—and after a very little while I—well, if I had known you were married it wouldn't have made you any less dear to me; but I might have thought I ought to go away, or something like that. I don't believe I would have, though. I think that in any case we should have come to just where we are now—except, perhaps, that I might have the more guilty feeling, instead of you."

"I'm glad you haven't," he averred. "I'd rather hate myself than have you hate yourself on account of me!"

"I shouldn't do anything so excessive as that," she ob-

jected. "The only thing that could make me hate myself would be to know that I loved you ignobly or made you less noble because you loved me. I'm not afraid of love, dear. It is the greatest, divinest thing that can happen to any of us. Any way it comes, it brings due portion of sorrow for all it brings of bliss. I don't expect it to work differently for me—perhaps I am almost wise enough not to *want* it different from what it has been, immemorially. There have been so many wonderful pathfinders along our difficult way—and some of them have left us such heartening messages."

He told her, ashamedly, how near he had been to flight—and who it was that deterred him.

"I ought to have had that much man in me without need of a poor little sister of the night to set me straight," he said.

Eleanor smiled, mistily.

"I'm glad you didn't have—that you needed her," she replied. "I'm glad for her—poor child—that she could go on her sad, outcast way cheered by the thought that out of her depths she was able to help. Nothing does us so much good as being needful to some one—does it? Maybe if it were oftener possible for us to *need* the ministry of the outcast and distressed, instead of always wanting them to take ours, we'd really serve them much better.

"From the things you tell me about yourself, I'd say that you are the type of man who is singularly dependent on women spiritually as some other men are dependent on them physically. I think that this was one of the things about you that drew me to you and made me love you. I couldn't love a man who didn't need me, and need me to help him realise the best that was in him—or in heaven for him.

"In Maurice Hewlett's book, 'The Road in Tuscany,' there is something he says about Dante and Beatrice that set for me the—the ideal I strain toward—I can't reach it, but I can strive toward it. He says it was 'because Dante loved this girl that he freed his immortal part, and towered higher

than any of the sons of men. . . . She gave him strength to soar, taught him the mystery of Beauty and Desire, "imparadised his mind." . . . He repaid her with such sort as no woman, save the Queen of women, has ever received of man. But she had given him the keys of heaven! That, dear, is what it seems to me every woman should do for the man she loves and who loves her. It may be that I can do it for you—even though I may not belong to you. Some people"—she tried to smile—"think Beatrice was able to imparadise the mind of Dante because she was not his to have and to hold——"

"I don't believe that!" he protested, hotly.

"Neither do I. For the love Elizabeth Browning inspired seems to me to reach heights just as sublime. But the point for us, dear, is how much I can help you, and in what way. I know you well enough, and myself well enough, to know that neither of us could be happy if we overlooked any of our obligations to others. You are going back to your responsibilities, and it is my joy to believe that you are taking back to them a new heart, a new vision. I shall go on with my studies, but instead of theorising about love and its power, I shall *know*. Now, the question is, will it be easier for you to take up the old life if you cut yourself off from all but the memory of me, or if you hear from me now and then? Only you can decide that. You've got your sense of honor to satisfy——"

"Do you think I ought to try to satisfy it by keeping up a sham, a mockery? My sense of honour was all going to pieces in those horrible conditions, even before I knew you. They are going to be ten thousand times harder, now."

"You don't know—you may find your heart so full-fed, so warmed, so rested from its seeking, that things which used to madden you will now appeal only to your tenderness, your *noblesse oblige*. I only know that you must try, dear—not for her sake, only, but for your own. You know you must—don't you?"

He nodded.

"You must make a supreme effort to do what seems to you your duty. And I must help you. We understand each other, now; nothing can ever undo that. We won't try to decide anything now. But you think it over and tell me frankly what you think will be easiest for you."

She rose, as if she hoped thereby to change the current of their talk for a while at least.

"Would you," he begged, "think it wrong if I asked you to kiss me?"

Her face flushed exquisitely, but she did not withhold from him the clear, sweet, woman-conscious gaze of her blue eyes.

"No," she murmured.

And he clasped her close; no passive, merely acquiescent body but one that clung to him ardently—shyness forgot, coyness undreamed-of—the warmth of her deep loving in the ecstasy of her response to his embrace.

There was no need for her to say that if she thought her kiss would weaken him in his resolution, she would not have given it. He knew that.

On their way back to Florence he told her tale after tale of *Montezuma* and its people, so she might the more readily follow him there in her imagination. He told her about Lufkin and Esperanza; about the Blaikies; about Thad Stilwell and Pearl; about the hospital and Sister Annunciata; and more about Alice.

"When I go back," he said, "I shall understand many things I didn't half understand before. I know, now, what Blaikie means by the 'big moments we've got to remember'—'the times when we touched the highest.' I feel that no man has ever been carried into a higher mountain of vision by his Beloved—shown more of 'the mystery of Beauty and Desire.' Surely, dear heart, I must be more of a man than ever I was before. You said some lines to me yesterday that express it. Will you say them again so I can't forget them—about 'so grew my own small life complete—' "

“‘As nature obtained her best of me—
One born to love you, sweet!’ she murmured.

“‘So, earth has gained one man the more,
And the gain of earth must be heaven’s gain, too.’”

“Yes.”

The exaltation of his mood was such as he had never known before, nor ever been able even to dream of. To have told her his love, and to have been told hers, was more beatitude than his soul could well contain. He felt that he could do anything for his dear Lady’s sake—that there could not be a task sufficiently hard for him to undertake, to prove himself worthy of her favour.

There is knighthood in most men, if one knows how to find it. And most men are happier in exercising it than in any otherwise. But it is difficult to sustain the mood—as Stephen was to learn later.

Eleanor was both happier and sadder than she had ever been. She was under no delusion as to what she had undertaken. But about herself she durst not think until she had got him off, full valiantly, to his great joust against his haplessness.

CHAPTER XIX

MANY things seem possible in Dante's Italy. No other land has known so much agony; no other land has yielded so much beauty. The blood and tears of Italy are never for a moment lost to sight in the flowering of her fields, the loveliness of her towns and crumbling villages; but the memory of them does not depress. For travail in Italy has brought forth life and the power of infinite begetting; whereas in some other countries, as in many individuals, it has delivered many still-born and many sterile. To conceive, that one may feel immortality stirring within; to bear, that one may see the fruit of one's suffering enriching the world—these are the highest privileges which God grants to any creature. Italy is saturated with spiritual ardour of an immemorial lineage and world-wide extent—her heritage, that she shares royally with all western peoples. One who walks those ways Æneas trod carrying the aged Anchises, on their flight from Troy; those pleasant hill-paths Virgil climbed, cheered by the company of Horace; those roads that Cæsar's legions followed with Empire's westering star; those river banks that Dante travelled to exile; those bird-choristered vales where Petrarch sung; those craggy descents from hill-town aeries down which innumerable brown youths scrambled to flood Italy with the glories of the Renaissance; those sunny vineyard slopes, and hardy olive-clad rises, and fragrant citrus groves that Goethe loved and made Mignon mourn; those shining scimiters of sandy shore where Shelley mused and Byron wooed and the pale young Endymion of an English stable-yard plained that his name was writ in water, what time the gods were writing it among the stars;—one who walks these ways and a thousand others like them walks in a company whose splendid sorrows have immeasurably enriched the world.

Almost all towns in Italy are ports, actually or approximately. Yet no country is so hard to get away from; because Alps do not shut her out of mind, nor seas obliterate her traces from the soul.

"Oh woman country, wooed not wed,
Loved all the more by earth's male-lands,
Laid to their hearts instead!"

Stephen put the steadily-widening distances of three weeks' journeying between Florence and himself—and found himself, in Los Angeles, more held by Italy than he had been on Vallombrosa's heights.

His return to the bungalow was the severest ordeal he had ever essayed. Rather, his dread anticipation of it was. The actual event was commonplace enough, except for his own feelings which he carefully concealed.

He had been gone four months—a trifle longer than any time before—but Lucile had been so agreeably occupied that to her the separation seemed fairly short. She liked saying that her husband was "abroad on business," and showing picture cards from him, cards from London and Paris and Rome, to prove it. Also, she anticipated much in the way of lace, and kid gloves, and embroideries.

Stephen had stopped off the overland limited at Tucson, dropped down to Nogales, and made a trip to the mines; finding much there and in the whole Mexican situation that he must give immediate attention. His dash out to the coast was partly to discharge what he deemed his duty to Lucile and Eileen, and partly to confer with his principal bankers and attorneys.

His train got in about eight in the morning of a sultry July day. The major part of his European luggage he had left at Montezuma. But, knowing what impatience there would be to see his gifts, he waited until he could get the small trunk he had brought, loaded onto a taxi with him; then started for home.

Eileen flew down the walk, when she heard the taxi door slammed, and hurled herself at him while he was counting change for his fare.

The clinging of her thin little arms was more than he could bear calmly in his high emotional state; tears sprang from too-full wells, and filled his eyes. He held the child so close that she cried:

"Ouch! you squeeze too hard."

Lucile came, then, and rapturously embraced him—though the taxi-cab driver had not yet given him his change nor decided if, for another quarter, he would so demean himself as to carry in the trunk.

"Honey, darlin'! Oh, I am so glad to see you!"

Hanging to him, one on either side, they escorted him within.

The driver, deciding that his dignity was not purchasable for a paltry two-bits, left the trunk at the curb, and whirled away.

Stephen, disgusted, went out and carried it in—to Lucile's intense dismay. What would the neighbours think?

Breakfast was eaten somewhat hastily—for fear that Stephen would go off, downtown, before opening his trunk.

Lucile thought he looked "fine and dandy," and said so with enthusiasm. She asked him several questions about Paris and London, and opined that it must have been "awfully hot and dirty in Italy." But her curiosity about his experiences was evidently not great.

She reported to him how many of "the very nicest houses" she was now admitted to, and how she believed that by next winter she would be asked to dinners and luncheons instead of just to teas; and more to the same effect. Also, that she had entered Eileen in the "most select" private school, for the fall.

Everything was exactly as if he had been here yesterday—everything but that in himself which was as if he had been absent a thousand years and had lived two hundred lifetimes.

How was he to cramp to the measure that here obtained, the marvellously expanded interests which even four months ago were tortured by these confines?

Also, his eye caught evidences of that slackness which so fretted him: the plated silver on the breakfast table was in sad need of a brightening rub; the linen was badly ironed and by no means immaculate; his cup had a little nick in the rim; the platter from which he served bacon was cracked in its glaze and brown stains had penetrated beyond the reach of soap and water; the waitress looked unkempt, as if she had overslept and under-toiletted; the toast was burnt, and cold; Eileen's white stockings wrinkled because her elastics were loose; there was a button missing from the back of her percale frock—which had buttons because it was "ready made"—and so on. Inertia, either to do or to direct, was indicated wherever his glance fell.

Heroically, Stephen tried to shut the door of his mind against all these trifles. He hastened as much as they did, to get to the trunk.

He had bought with the lavishness of that type of man who triples his gifts as his love grows less; they were the offerings of a contrite heart which multiplies material bounty in the stead of that spiritual largess it cannot command.

There were kid gloves for Lucile and her mother and sisters—dozens of pairs; there were swathings of point duchess flouncings; there were Liberty stuffs and scarves and capes; there were bead-work bags, and silk stockings, and French-paste slipper-buckles, and Swiss handkerchiefs, and embroidered dress patterns and blouse patterns.

Stephen had instinctive but uncultivated good taste. He had bought very little, all told, in his lifetime; he had given practically no time at all to the study of standards in taste, and knew little about style, but when objects were presented to him for selection, his choice was always of the least florid, the most restrained and chaste. He had not been unmindful, in the purchasing, that Lucile's taste was widely

different from his own; and he had tried, with that excess of painstaking which he conceived to be his duty, to buy what he thought would most please her—and yet to get things that might tend, while pleasing her, to raise her standards of beauty.

He found, as he looked about him in the bungalow, that those expressions of Lucile's home-making taste which, some months ago, had merely jarred him with their colour discords and babel of styles, now appalled him by their meaninglessness. There was not a picture on the walls which had the slightest reason for being there except that to Lucile's eye it was "pretty," or because it was a replica of one she had seen in a home she admired; no picture in the world had for her any association, any significance, any special message or memory or delight. The vapidness of her bric-a-brac transcended description. Lucile's house, like herself, was a painful effort to conform to what "they have" and "they do"—"they" of her discipleship being the most stereotyped and crudely unreal class of persons known to exist.

Her gurglings of joy in Stephen's gifts encouraged him, a little, in his hope of winning her to an appreciation of better things. He was not shrewd enough to suspect that her valuation of these articles was based on their having come from Paris, and the effect that would lend in their display.

Eileen was so eager to rush off and show her Paris doll, that she was scarcely able to wait for a due inspection of her other gifts. But a coat and hat from one of those artists who make living pictures of French children, captivated her when shown, more than the doll. Refused permission to display these, "yet," she soon took herself off with her toy.

Rather shyly—because, though she was his wife and the mother of his child, Lucile was essentially a strange woman to him—Stephen proffered the last of his presents: four sets of exquisite lingerie; sheen linen lawn, embroidered as

by fairy fingers, trimmed with real Valenciennes, and run with soft, lustrous ribbons of the palest pink.

"Oh!" Lucile cried, "how wonderful! They're lovely enough for any *bride*!"

"Why should a bride's underwear be so much prettier than a wife's?" he asked meaningfully.

But Lucile did not get his meaning.

"Why, I suppose because it's important to make a good impression on new husbands," she replied.

"And aren't 'old husbands' worth impressing?"

She jumped up and hugged him.

"Of *course*, Honey! But they're not so interested in their wives' underwear."

"How do you know?"

"Well, you never hear of 'em makin' a fuss over it like they did at first."

"Do they always have it to make a fuss over?"

She laughed.

"Maybe not. But there are so many things to think about, later on—and to spend money on. I wouldn't ever dream of buyin' myself things like these. I don't know as I'll dare to wear 'em—they're so fine."

"If you'll wear them all the time," he pleaded, "I'll buy you as many more as you need."

Lucile shook her head.

"It's too extravagant. I'd rather put the money in other things—or in the bank."

"What other things?"

"Well, a grand bird of Paradise, or something like that—that don't wear out so easy."

"And that more people can see?"

"Yes—if you want to know!"

Her tone was bantering—free from resentment, because she did not in the least understand that Stephen meant anything beyond a little, playful teasing.

"Doesn't it ever occur to you," he asked, trying not to speak coldly, "that it might be nice to attract *me*?"

"To attract you?" she echoed, blankly.

"Yes. It surprises you. Am I not worth it?"

"Don't be silly! Of course you are. But I thought you liked me to make a good impression—so you could feel proud of me. I'm sure I always try——"

Stephen recognised the familiar break in her voice; and his thought flew to the templed groves of Vallombrosa, and a woman whose first and last concern, even in the shock of her hopes' destruction, was for his soul's dignity and that which would best satisfy his sense of honour. He wondered what Eleanor would think he ought to do—whether he should hasten to close a profitless discussion, or persevere in the effort to make Lucile understand. Heretofore, he reflected, he had always given up at the first tremour of voice and splash of tears. Perhaps that was why he had met with no success.

"Lucile," he urged, "you surely can't think that my opinion of you is based on what other people say about you?"

"Most men," she retorted, "take a great pride in having their wives popular and admired."

"Well I don't know what 'most men' care about in women. I don't doubt there are some who like their wives to advertise the family prosperity. I only know that to me it's very much more important what *I* think of you, than what some society reporter does."

Lucile flushed, angrily; the taunt in that remark reached her.

"Women, nowadays," she flung at him, "don't spend their whole lives tryin' to please a lord and master. They're broader than they used to be. Our lives are just as important to us as yours are to you. I'm sure I give up most of my time to managin' your house and bringin' up your child, and bein' as good and true a wife as I know how. And what do I get for it, but my board and keep? There was a lecturer at our club last month who said wives ought to demand half of all their husbands earn——"

"Lots of them would lose money if they did that," Stephen interposed, dryly.

Ignoring the interruption, she went on.

"—Yet the minute we try to be our individual selves, to 'realise ourselves,' beyond the home, you think we're gaddin' and neglectin' you. I certainly spend a thousand times more time in my home than you do! An' I try a great deal harder to please you than you ever do to please me."

She believed this—believed it earnestly.

Stephen knew he ought to be down town consulting with his bankers and lawyers on the Mexican situation. But here was an opportunity to pursue something that was more vital to him than the effect of Madero's government on the protection of mining interests.

"Does it seem to you," he asked, persuasively, "that I do very little to try to please you?"

"Oh, no, honey darlin'! I didn't really mean that. You're the most generous, dear precious in the whole world. But——"

She hesitated.

"But what?"

"But you don't stay here like I want you to, an' go places with me, an' take an interest in somethin' besides just makin' money. I ought to be as important to you as more money!"

"Yes," he assented, gravely, "you ought! You ought to be a great deal more important to me than all the money in the world—you and Eileen."

Mollified, she went on.

"Then why don't you stay here, honey, and belong to things, an' make a position for yourself that we can all be proud of?"

"Aren't you proud of anything I have done or may do elsewhere?"

"Oh, of course I am. But people here don't know much about *Montezuma*—except just the few that know about mines. Why can't you sell out an' go in business here—bankin' or somethin' like that?"

"This isn't a good time to sell Mexican properties. And, anyway, I want to develop them further before I let any of them go. I have a lot of anxieties about those holdings, now, Lucile; I can't sit here and let things go. It is probable that I'll have to be at the mines, or in Washington and New York, a great deal. That's why I'm glad to have this talk with you, now. We're partners; it's important for me to know how you feel about our interests, and I suppose it's important for you to know how I feel——"

"Of course."

"The only way to get along in any partnership is to have the clearest possible understanding and coöperation. I gather from what you say, that you feel you are not getting all you earn——"

"Oh, darlin'! I didn't say that!"

"Well, then, I got a wrong impression. Just what was it you did say?"

"I said it is important for me to be somethin' in the world besides just your housekeeper and Eileen's mother; I must express my individuality in other ways—must be an individual——"

"Well, I agree to that; I want you to do all that, and more. How do I hinder you?"

"You put things so funny," she objected, pouting. "I didn't say you hindered me——"

"Put it differently, then; what don't I do that I ought to do to help you realise yourself?"

"You don't stay here, I told you," she repeated.

"Do you need me to help you be an individual?"

She looked bewildered. What she had got from a few lectures at the club did not carry her so far.

"I—oh, honey, let's not argue like this the very first minute you're back. I hate arguments!"

"This isn't an argument," he protested; "at least, I don't want it to be. It's just talking things over between partners, after a separation. And we're going through with it, if you please."

"You're cross at me!"

"I am not. But I want you to talk to me like a grown woman and not like a child. If there is anything under Heaven that I can do to help you develop, help you be a personality, as you say, I want to do it. I'll hire a housekeeper to run your house, if that takes too much of your time. I'll pay any price to a woman who'll teach Eileen something besides the trash her mind is filled with now. I'll emancipate you, as far as my money can do it, from every other concern on earth, if you'll make a great, big, serious business of developing yourself."

"I don't know what you mean," she cried, offendedly.

"I know you don't," he replied, patiently, "and I'm not sure that I'm not crazy. But it seemed to me the only fair thing to do. For, the plain truth, my dear girl, is that I can hire so much better housekeeping and child-training than you do, that it seems a pity to me not to do it. You cost me a great deal of money. I presume that, as an honest woman, you wish to be worth it, to me as well as to yourself and your friends. The only possible way you can be worth it to me, is to take such advantage of leisure and opportunity that you will become a very fine woman. These are wonderful times to live in, dear girl. This is a wonderful world. How would you like to go abroad for the fall and winter—to travel and study and see beautiful things?"

Lucile looked terrified.

"I wouldn't like it," she demurred. "I like it here. I'm just gettin' established. There's some prestige in goin' abroad, but this 's a bad time for us to break away—it'd be a lot better for me to take all that money an' use it here. I could do it to more advantage."

Stephen winced.

"What kind of advantage?" he asked.

"Why, gettin' on—socially, you know."

"I didn't think we were talking about society."

"Oh! we just go round an' round!" she wailed. "I don't

know what you mean an' you don't know what I mean. It's terrible."

"Yes?" he agreed, "it's terrible. Let's quit."

"You ain't mad?"

"No, I'm not mad."

"Not a teensy, tinsey bit?"

"Not a bit."

"I don't want to go off an' leave you, love-ums! I want to stay here in my own little house-ums, an' make everybody in Los Angeles say what an attractive wife you've got. Maybe you'll be proud of me some day!"

"Maybe," he echoed, and therewith the "argument" was closed.

CHAPTER XX

STEPHEN had agreed with Eleanor that he would not try to write to her until after he had seen Lucile and made her a certain proposition which, if accepted, would entail at least one letter; otherwise, he was to write or not to write as he felt would be best for him.

"Why," he had expostulated, "do you condemn me to think only of myself? Why may I not try to think what is best for you, too?"

"Because," her answer was, "your situation is the more difficult—there is more in it to consider. And the only thing I desire is that you may do what your best and highest self dictates. I must help you *up*—or my heart will break."

After his talk with Lucile, Stephen wrote:

"I made the offer fairly, but it was declined. I cannot help being glad. How I could have accepted so much of you, I do not know. That you could accomplish anything, I doubt. Remember Mrs. Hatley. A more wonderful thing, no woman has ever proposed, I am sure. And I know you would have gone through with it, superbly. But I have no reason to believe other than that your effort would have been wasted. Spirit cannot be transfused, like blood. If it could, I know you would give yours—which I worship—into the veins of the woman who is my wife. I adore you for what you would do—but I can't help thanking God it is beyond your power to perform. This doesn't mean that I am not trying as heroically as you would have me try, to reorganise my life on some plan worthy of all you have taught me. But if you were not you—were not just as you are—I should be adrift. I must be able to think

about you as I knew you in that transfiguring fortnight, or I should be worse off than a solar system without its sun, or a mariner without his pole star. That you are in the universe fixes and measures many things for me. Whether I see you or not I shall always be intensely conscious of you. It is inconceivable to me that I shall ever again do a thing of the slightest consequence, without consciousness of you, without wondering what you would think about it. I have a feeling as if God had been trying to tell me about you, ever since I was a tiny little 'feller.' I knew there was something he was saying to me; but I couldn't understand. When I saw you, I knew. It is terribly hard to think why I was permitted to sign away my birthright when I didn't know what the birthright was. But I try to remember what you told me about our right to love not being at all the same as a right to possess. Nothing could ever make me doubt my right to love you. And I shall not be content with less than the utmost witness I can bear to the good your love has wrought in me. I read the poem you told me to, about Raphael writing sonnets and Dante trying to paint an angel. If I could paint my adoration of you in 'dear Madonnas,' seems to me I'd be satisfied without trying to write you sonnets; and if I could praise you in verse like Dante's, I'd forego the painting. But how I'm to express my love of you in my kind of work, I haven't yet been able to think. I can tell you this, though: I've unpacked my little souvenirs and set up for myself in my old bachelor quarters at Montezuma a little, rude shrine for my priceless memories; and Hugh Blaikie came in, the other night, while I was arranging it. He was like another person! The spell of Italy was cast on him, too—years ago—and as he sat and talked to me of Florence and Venice he became irradiated; he was like a poet; it was wonderful. His eyes were full of unshed tears when he said good-night. 'God! but it lifts a fellow up,' he said, 'to talk about the places where he was once on a time one with all the dreamers who have moved the world. If I could glimpse him oftener—

that kid, Hugh Blaikie, who had his great day in Italy—I tell you, I wouldn't feel so far from home. If there's a hereafter, Gov'nor, and it holds any bliss for me, I hope God'll let me be again, forever and a day, such as I was when I wandered in Italy.' So you have reached poor old Blaikie, through me, and found the best of him—and that makes me very happy. I hope for other chances to have, like Dante, 'my beatitude in praising my dear lady' and all she has done for me."

The Blaikies lived, now, in the cottage that had been Lucile's, and Stephen was in his old quarters adjoining the store and mess-room. Lucile had made little impress on Montezuma camp, and memories of her presence there were almost effaced. Stephen felt his fetters scarcely at all, when he was at the mines, and Eleanor seemed his in a wonderful way—the continuation of all his beautiful dreams.

He kept the old *Graphic* picture as a centre of things in his sitting-room; it was almost the only tangible bit out of that dreamful past which he was so eager to connect with Eleanor. And about it he arranged his views of Venice and Florence; his alabaster miniature of the Pisa baptistery; his small bronze cast of Michelangelo's *David*; his ink-well set in a gondola; his new books; his lithographs of *Prima-vera* and of Dante meeting Beatrice at the corner of the Trinità bridge; his della Robbia flasks of Chartreuse from the Certosa di Firenze; his terra cotta medallion with Giotto's head of Dante on it in low relief, coloured; his copy of an old Etruscan lamp; his photographs of the Siena pulpit and the Pisan Campo Santo; his tortoise-shell paper-cutter shaped like a gondola's *ferro*; all his precious little reminders of those shining days. He had bought none but the simplest souvenirs—only such as would fit into the rude surroundings he could give them at the camp. But the placing of these small treasures gave him a supreme thrill. For now he realised what the building of a home might be, the hanging on Love's high altar of all the symbols that

express our sense of Love. (His Roman purchases he did not unpack; they were mere objects, enhanced by no memories of Her.)

When he could be here, Stephen was happy, despite grave worries about what Mexico was pleased to call its government. But business sent him often to Los Angeles, and a prodding sense of duty kept him there until, routed, he fled to the wilderness to save his soul.

At Montezuma camp no one was unaware of his lack of happiness with Lucile. Nothing was ever said about it in his hearing; the respect with which he always referred to her was the others' cue, but the least-discerning among them knew it was the more elaborate because it was so void of feeling. And although he maintained it, in spite of his realisation that it did not deceive, he was infinitely less constrained among them than in Los Angeles where his acquaintances were slight and where it seemed to him to be taken for granted that he was, or should be, a devoted husband.

Most difficult of all for him was Lucile's own attitude. Apparently, she never for an instant suspected that anything but "business" kept him from her side. It seemed to him that, were he in her place, he would know, infallibly, the worthlessness of the kisses he gave her, of the caresses that no sense of duty could warm, of the letters without thrill or yearning. But Lucile vaguely laid what little lack she felt to his absorption in money-getting, and looked forward, also vaguely, to a day when he would have "money enough to retire" and spend the rest of his days pursuing with her such pleasures as she cared most for. She supposed that "all men" were more or less "like that." It was one of the plaintive things in woman's lot that "man's love is of his life a thing apart; a woman's is her whole existence;" also that "men must work and women must weep;" and sundry other dogmas constantly reiterated by her favourite fictionists. She considered herself very hungry for affection; but she condemned utterly those other hungry

hearts whose acquaintance she made in her fifteen-cent monthly shocker, and held herself no little of a saint because, with her beauty and her warmth, she never thought of allowing herself the diversion of a flirtation—not to mention a lover. The “movies” of which she was inordinately fond, were full of suggestions for neglected wives, and frequently made plain the way by which a too-absorbed husband can be won back to Romeo loverliness by discovering his heart-hungry wife in a cabaret restaurant with “another man.” But Lucile was not heart-hungry enough to do anything which might endanger her social advance. In movies and monthlies, heroines “get away with” many things which, emulated, would cause one’s daughter to be dropped from the city’s most select dancing-class, and one’s own name to be heavily inked out of the best visiting lists. So long as the élite did not frown upon her, Lucile could endure a great deal of such husbandly neglect as the most élite ladies themselves accept uncomplainingly.

Stephen could not fathom those mental processes; so he could only marvel at the complacency of a woman who can accept as her due everything that a man can give her, without disturbing herself by the slightest wonder as to what she is giving him in return.

Eleanor had offered to give herself wholly, for a year, or for longer, if need be, to the task of trying to rouse in Lucile, and in Eileen, some ardour for those things and places Stephen had so passionately loved; had dedicated herself and all the wealth of her spirit, to the effort that might make the woman who was his wife companionable with Stephen, since the woman with whom he was companionable could not be his wife. But Lucile had declined this proposition without inquiring into the particulars. Ephraim was not so wedded to his idols, nor he “who made the great refusal” so unwilling to embrace a new faith, a new hope.

Mrs. Harrod, who came on one of her frequent visits

soon after Stephen's return, applauded Lucile's resolution in "stayin' at home."

"You're right, honey," she cooed, "a woman's place is in her home, an' not gaddin' all over the earth. Stephen's restless, an' he can't see why you are not. Men are like that—everlastin'ly trampin' somewhere, if it's on'y down street to Walsh's to hear the border gossip. There ain't any stability in 'em. But women have to put up with their ways, and do the best they can. You stick by your home an' get yourself respected for a fine woman, and he'll be proud of you."

"He's always makin' fun of me for carin' what people think about me," Lucile averred, plaintively.

Her mother flushed angrily.

"Don't you care!" she cried. "It ain't right for him to do that way. He'd sing a different tune if he had a wife who didn't care what anybody thought! You do right, anyway. You can't expect a man to understand you—they never do. I don't know what this world would have come to if the women hadn't gone ahead an' done right without any encouragement from the men."

Mrs. Harrod was a flaccid anti-suffragist; but as a sower of sex-discord, an expounder of the immutable differences between men and women, she was positively earnest; if any daughter of hers, or any friend, cherished any fallacies with regard to husbands as the peculiar instruments of God's purpose in developing women's saintliness, it was not the fault of her negligence. There was no doubt in her mind that men are "a triflin' lot," and a decent woman who permits one of them to support her gives him the only cloak of respectability his trivial personality could ever hope to wear.

Lucile was not addicted to stock-taking; but whenever she essayed anything of the sort she was always gratified by the size of her credit-balance. Stephen left a great deal to be desired, even as husbands go; but she was glad to

have the applause of her conscience, which assured her that not once had she been remiss in her wifely duties.

This sense of having overpaid her due, of having overlooked his shortcomings and forgiven him his unpayable debt, was quite patent to Stephen. Also he could, or thought he could, see a reflection of it in the attitude toward him not only of Lucile's mother but likewise of her acquaintances. Husbands were not overpraised in Lucile's set. A favourite diversion of the women whose husbands paid two or three or four or five servants to lighten household burdens and increase wifely leisure, was listening to parlour talks on the injustices endured by their sex. Doubtless one lifetime is too brief to hear them all; so that was why, presumably, no lecturer ever had time to suggest the possibility that women could be unjust to men. At any rate, the opinion was general in Lucile's "set" that wives and mothers were a kind of petticoated apostolic succession through whom, mystically, the traditions and standards of the only true goodness were handed on not by virtue of what they did but by virtue of the offices they held.

Lucile regarded her motherhood with rapt reverence; no heresy could have seemed to her more blasphemous than a suggestion that she did not meet the highest requirements of her relation to Eileen. Mrs. Harrod considered her oldest daughter "the sweetest mother in California," surpassed nowhere and equalled only by Rosamund in Arizona and Peaches in New Mexico. (The truth was, she approved the somewhat more vigorous and positive methods in those two other households, far less than the better reproduction of her own methods in Lucile's; but she deemed it her motherly duty not to express preference.)

Eileen was a vain, shallow, disingenuous little poppet, fuller of snobbery than one would suppose a six-year-old child could be. She appalled her father by references to persons "not in our set," by her very instinct for "effect," by her prattle of "style," by her kind of cajolery and the nature of the things she sought by it.

"The child," he reflected, horrified, "has well-developed courtesan methods, even now—all but the courtesan's intent to pay!"

He made an earnest plea to have her sent away to school "in some semi-country place, where she can have all sorts of out-door life—sports and companionship with nature, and animal friends; where she can wear plain clothes, and eat plain food, and select her playmates from among children of many sorts, choosing what appeals to her and not what she thinks is to her 'social advantage.' There must be schools, somewhere, in which a baby like she is can have a chance for her life amid conditions in which it is possible for a woman to develop. She ought to go nutting and berry-picking; she ought to pop corn and bob for apples and skate and sled down hill and make taffy in the big kitchen, and stage circus-shows in the barn and go on picnics, with watermelon and a layer cake, and learn to love books that'd fill her mind with great longings and great associations. She ought to know something about a few beautiful pictures, at least. She ought to come in contact with some personalities big enough and real enough to make an impression on her young mind. She ought to hear fine things discussed. She ought to go to the store and get a jug of molasses for the cookies, Saturday morning. She ought to know how much molasses costs. She ought to cut out some cookies with the cutter, shaped like a fat, paunchy man, and put currants in for eyes and some on for buttons, and look forward to the day when you'll let her mix the dough. She isn't getting any of her birthright as an American child. Why doesn't she jump rope, or play bean bag, or blow soap bubbles, or play 'I spy' or 'Drop the Handkerchief?' Why has she no jacks, or checkers, or game of 'Authors'? Why do I never see her wearing a looped-up old skirt, trolloping 'round the neighbourhood 'paying calls'? Why doesn't she dress up the kitten, or bury a dead bird, or plant peachpits, or make mud pies, or do anything that she'll love to remember when she's grown up and the wonderland

of her childhood is the one possession that can't be depreciated or lost?"

Lucile regarded him in pained astonishment.

"Little girls of good families don't do those things any more," she demurred. "And I wouldn't think of sending Eileen away to school. The place for girls is with their mothers."

"Didn't you ever do any of those things?" he pleaded.

"I don't remember," she replied, her tone indicating that she did not care to try. "But times have changed; and besides, Eileen is in a position to have many more advantages than I had."

"Such as," he interposed, "the rubber-tired English baby-cab she asked me for last night, to roll her doll in; and it must be all in white, because a girl across the street has one like that. Next thing'll be a 'lower-class' child dressed like a trained nurse, to push her cab for her!"

"If you want your child to be happy," Lucile affirmed, "you must let her hold her own among her playmates. Of course, if you want her brought up in the slums, a very much simpler doll-buggy would do."

She was dissolving into a fluid state.

Stephen no longer felt himself a brute when Lucile wept; he no longer rushed off and bought elaborate peace-offerings. But argument with an aggrieved saint is futile. So he gave up, one more time. He wished he knew what he ought to do about Eileen. He was only theoretically fond of her; but he felt that he had a responsibility toward her which was not wholly payable in board and clothes and dancing-school bills.

But Lucile seemed to think that only mothers know what should be done for children.

Why Stephen persisted in his efforts, would have been hard for him to say. He did not expect to succeed; and yet he felt that he ought to keep on trying. The relief when he could flee into the wilderness was very great—even

though there he was confronted with grave troubles due to the depredations of revolutionists.

Montezuma and his other properties were better protected than many of the smaller and more isolated mining camps; but, even at that, Stephen had suffered theft of many horses and of almost all his cattle. What was to-day a band of outlaws might be to-morrow the party locally in power; so that resistance to any demands, if temporarily successful, was likely to cost heavily in persecution from which there was no redress. It was necessary to keep, if possible, in the good graces of every ruffian whose ruthlessness might make him a dictator or a dictator's aid.

The white women on some outlying properties were brought by their husbands to Montezuma. Blaikie talked of sending Crystal across the border—but Crystal declined to go. Frank Cunningham's wife, of whom Stephen had talked to Lucile when she questioned him about women in the wilderness, closed her cabin and accepted Stephen's hospitality only when her husband agreed to come, too—the tatterdermalion Constitutionals having left him so denuded that he was unable for the present to continue operations at his mine. Stephen motored over to fetch them and their most precious and necessary effects, and Crystal helped to make them comfortable in the quarters which had once been hers.

Elsa Cunningham, studied at close range, gave Stephen much to think about. He wished so ardently that Eleanor could know her. For here was the essence of that womanhood of which she had so often talked to him after that day in the Boboli Garden.

Cunningham was desperately anxious about his workings, and about those above-ground possessions which represented so many years of toil and sacrifice. He felt, too, that Elsa should go up into the States, and take their little four-year-old boy. But Elsa smiled at the proposition that she betake herself to security and leave Frank to his battle against adversity—smiled as she might have smiled at Bobsey-Boy

if he had presented some playful plan of setting forth, alone, to hunt bears.

Her presence made a greater difference in Montezuma camp than Stephen would have supposed possible—much though he had always admired her. It was not for him to fathom how she did things; but he felt the results, and marvelled greatly. Her tenderness and her wisdom in her relations to her husband, were equalled only by her wisdom and tenderness in her relations with her son.

Stephen became a great favourite with Bobsey, and spent many hours in that young person's company. Also, he was frequently a guest at the Cunninghams' table, which he found a most welcome change from the mess. And evenings, by the burning mesquite in Stephen's sitting-room, were often quite gala; for Blaikie discoursed mellowly, under the influence of the Italian souvenirs; and 'Enry disclosed more discipleship to art than any one had ever suspected; and the Cunninghams had keen interest in everything cultural. Thad Stilwell had had several successors, in six years, and the present assayer and chemist was a musical youngster who sang melodiously and played the guitar. Reilly was no longer there, and the newer night foreman (although the mines were not now working a night shift) was a Welshman named Evans, who could be drawn into the group always by singing, and who was especially happy on Sunday evenings when gospel hymns were sung before Bobsey's bedtime. Blaikie had a talent for these occasions, too; and even Arrick sat in the background. Moreover, Lufkin dearly loved to bring some of his older children, and occasionally, Esperanza, too, to hear "Pull for the shore, sailor," and "Work, for the night is coming," and "Jesus, Lover of my Soul," and "Abide with me."

Stephen sent for a phonograph and some good records, and these gave a great deal of delight. But the songs they all sang together were the dearest to every one. And the friendliness thus engendered was very warm.

Sunday was a day of days for Bobsey; he had his father's company more than on busy days, and Stephen's, and the men of the mess were eager for his society, and altogether he was a much occupied small person who, though his activities continued through the assembling of evensong guests, was usually glad to seek his mother's lap soon after song commenced. From that throne he joined in to such extent as he could, until presently his nodding head lay quiet on her breast, her arms enfolding him, her face drooped in the pauses of her singing, to kiss his curly head.

Once, she set-going a memorable evening, by a few loving reminiscences of the happy Sunday evenings of her childhood. Blaikie followed these with a picture of some Scottish scenes deep-graven in his memory; and Evans told, shyly, of his chapel-going youth in Cardiff; Lufkin dilated on Cornwall and the Sunday teas with clotted cream and strawberries, and the amber brew from the Staffordshire pot; and 'Enry recalled that time when he made his first communion and walked in the procession of the Fête-dieu, his childish praises rising to God from that glorious Cathedral of Chartres where childish voices have praised God for eight hundred years. The new chemist, Arthur Ames, was a New England boy, whose memories of childhood were rich in an old white meetinghouse, facing a village common where minute-men and fighters for our freedom of the seas, Zachary Taylor's veterans, saviours of the Union, and liberators of Cuba, had successively been drawn up in proud array. Stephen told of Alice reading him "Pilgrim's Progress" and singing "Onward Christian Soldiers." Arrick was a little boy of the western plains—a "sod-house" boy, who knew nothing of church on Sunday evenings, and much of chores; but he was able to recall pleasantly some evenings when the cattle-feeding was not too arduous, and his father was in a mood for pioneering tales. Frank Cunningham was a native of Virginia, and in his youth had been wont to see the beautiful white head of General Robert E. Lee bent in submission to the will of God who had not

permitted the Confederacy to triumph; and it was that white head and its noble relation to a cause which had to be lost for our nation's sake, that made profounder impress on at least one boy's soul than all the doctrine taught him.

The amount of this sort of thing that Elsa was able to develop in camp, was astonishing. Her love and her motherliness touched every one about her as with a chrism.

Faithful account of all this went over seas to Eleanor. And once on a time, when Bobsey had fallen asleep in Stephen's sitting-room where his mother had been telling him stories about some of the post cards of great paintings of which Stephen had made a book, and Elsa was sitting there keeping watch, "the Governor" came in—it was toward the latter part of a winter afternoon—and fell into a low-toned chat with her which led to his describing Eleanor as a lady who had lived at the same pension he was at in "Italy." He tried to be very casual, to speak of this lady along with the Hatelys as if his contact with her personality had been the merest brush in passing. But Elsa knew. She knew that thrill in a man's voice which only those lovers have who also are worshippers. She had been marvelling, for months, over a change in Mr. Bellas. There was only one thing she could be sure of about it, and that was that it had nothing to do with Lucile. (Her estimate of the ultimate possibilities in that situation had been made the first time she saw Mrs. Bellas.) Now she knew all that Stephen could have told her in the completest avowal—all but what he thought to do. And without suggesting to him that she guessed anything beyond what he had intended to reveal, she was able to make many occasions when she could ask him to tell her more of that lady's theories about women.

So carefully did Stephen guard Eleanor's name that he never mailed a letter to her from camp, but forwarded them to New York in envelopes addressed to his attorney there, who sent them on their way and received also the replies from Florence. Even from Elsa Cunningham Stephen kept all particularities that might give clue to Eleanor's identity.

What might befall him, gave him no concern; but he was determined that, though he had to die to prevent it, his lady should suffer no accusation on his account. His discourse of her, therefore, was almost entirely of the ideas she had expounded regarding women's relationship to life. He longed to tell this dear little woman how inadequately that lady "in Italy" was conveyed to any sense merely by his iteration of her philosophical reflections; he longed to dwell upon her wonderfulness as a wayfarer, to recount how tender her gaiety was, how rich her sense of romance, what grace she had for the pleasure in little things, what vision to perceive the significance of great and small. But his fear constrained him. He was not fearful of Elsa's discretion, nor of her loyalty. Yet, if anything ever occurred to cause an inquiry, she might be asked—so she must be able truthfully to say she did not know.

Consequently, their talks were characterised by Stephen's veering—sometimes quite suddenly—away from a thousand concretions he was bursting to dilate upon, and Elsa's appearing not to notice; even in abstractions, though, there was much to say, and for her own eager interest as well as to gratify him, she pursued the theme as frequently as she found opportunity.

"Would you," he asked once—and she knew perfectly what was in the back of his mind—"think that if a woman doesn't have the attitude toward her child that—that you have, with Bobsey—trying to help him delight in everything and have a rich store of childish memories to make him a good and happy man—would you think that if a woman doesn't seem to care about those things, her child is entitled to get them from some one else?"

Recollection of Eileen as she had been at Bobsey's age—the last time she was in camp—helped Elsa to answer.

"There are some children that nobody on earth could make alive—we don't like to believe it, but I'm sure it's true. You sometimes see a wonderful mother fail utterly with one of her children—the spark just isn't there. I'm try-

ing to think if I ever knew a sensitive, imaginative child to be cheated of his birthright because his mother was a dull, 'earthy' woman—and I can't remember one such. There are no fetters that bind a child's spirit. They live so much in their own world, anyway; sometimes, if we seem worthy, they let us in, a little way; but I doubt if anything we can do to them, drives them out of their kingdom and locks the gates. I have to struggle with myself not to play too much with Bobsey—to let him alone enough. I'm afraid most children aren't let alone enough."

"But if they're filled full of cheap ideas, false weights and measures?" he interposed. "If you had to go away, and some one taught Bobsey to respect people who are well dressed and to look down on others? If some one talked, constantly, in his hearing about money and not about manhood, about position and not about character or ideals or work?"

"It would hurt me," she admitted, "and it might hurt Bobsey—but I don't know. Who shaped your aspirations?"

"Books."

"And who taught you to love books?"

"I've always liked to think that Alice did."

"She encouraged you—but the stuff was in you. I think it's a beautiful privilege to encourage children. And it's a terrible crime to warp a child's mind——"

"And to cripple their self-mastery! You teach Bobsey to make wise choices, and to tell the truth absolutely, and to play generously with the young Lufkins. How would you feel if you knew some one were letting him do things that made you ashamed—vital things? Would you feel that he was being wronged, and that you ought to stop it?"

"Certainly!"

"What if it were his father who was doing him the wrong? I know you can't imagine that of Bobsey's father; but you can think of other men——"

"And if I wasn't able to counteract the wrong?"

He nodded.

"That's hard to say—too hard—I don't know. I can't think that I would live with such a man. When I found he was like that, I suppose I'd go away—but I don't know that, either. Women often love men who don't do right—love them very much indeed, and stay by them through everything—whether their children are endangered or not. You can't generalise about such things. Every case is different from all others, in some way. I can't see how any one ever presumes to judge—to say what is right and what is wrong, and what people should and should not do. There are so many hidden things that no one can see—things that bind and things that separate. I shouldn't think that any one could know the real inwardness, the hopefulness or lack of hopefulness, except the persons themselves. They know how much love they have. To me, everything looks futile and wrong that has no love in it. I can't see any real values in life that love does not animate. Marriage, motherhood, home, work, all mean so much to me that I can't bear to think of them divorced from the kind of love that spiritualises them. That's all I can say."

"The poor darling!" Elsa murmured, when recounting this conversation to Frank, that night. "He seems so pathetically *alone*. And he is so sweet-hearted—like a dear little boy!—and so helpless. I wanted to hold him on my lap, like I hold you, sometimes, and tell him to put his headie down and tell Mother all about it. What a tragedy that he should be fighting on in this way, afraid to tell his troubles—no companionship, no *anything*! I could kill that woman who hangs like a millstone about his neck! He'll never shake her off. And I can't advise him——"

"I shouldn't think you'd want the responsibility of advising him," her husband interposed.

"I thought I didn't at first!" Elsa admitted. "But afterwards it came to me that perhaps I was cowardly—perhaps I'm *expected* to help him, and others, out of the deep knowledge of love God has given me. Is there no obliga-

tion in that, dear? If you saw a poor, lean, hungry prospector wearing himself to the bone trying to locate values where you knew there weren't any, you'd tell him what you knew—wouldn't you? You wouldn't pass by and tell yourself it was none of your business. That man, Stephen Bellas, is starving. If I can help him realise how foolish he is, I'm going to do it."

She made many opportunities for expressing her convictions to Stephen in those roundabout ways his reticence permitted. And it was partly as a result of her encouragement that he determined to go over for a visit with Eleanor in July and August.

In April, conditions in Sonora got so bad that Stephen insisted on bringing Elsa and Bobsey and Crystal to Nogales. Blaikie came, too, and Cunningham; Stephen made a temporary place for the latter in the border office of his company, pending the time when he could return to his own property.

Lufkin, Enry and Evans, being citizens of countries known to protect their own, were comparatively safe from attack. Arrick didn't care what chances he took; and young Ames was delighted with the adventurous element of the situation—barricaded windows, loopholes cut in doors, armed guards, Indian runners bringing warning of hostile approach, savoured of romance to him; and for romance above all things was he anhungered. Blaikie brought all the company records, deeds, and other documents with him to the northern side of the border and there prosecuted such business as the conditions would permit.

Stephen went back and forth between the mines and the border, undeterred by warring factions, driving his big gray car along roads that were swept by the guns of both forces. Once, he was arrested five times in a hundred-mile run; and as his tattered captors were not uniformed, he had five times to guess which passport to show—a wrong guess meaning, probably, death then and there. Again, the

dust of his flying car mingled with the dirt thrown high by exploding shells, as Federalist and Constitutionalist exchanged greetings unmindful of his presence.

What tonic this was to the spirit of a man half-mad with the sense of his futility against meshes like Lucile's, not even he himself could estimate. But remonstrance with him was useless. It wasn't altogether for love of Montezuma that he made those wild dashes back and forth; it was in answer to a demand stronger than the protection of property—the demand of his soul to *dare*.

CHAPTER XXI

ELEANOR was in Paris, whither she had gone in early April after a winter in Rome. What her struggle had been only they can realise who have known one similar. Outwardly, her life was the same as it had been before Stephen came into it. Inwardly, all its springs were altered at the source. Loving him had changed every value in her, enhancing many but diminishing others. To an onlooker, it might not have been apparent what it was that Stephen had to give her, the withdrawal of which left her so desolate. Onlookers are forever forgetting how difficult to define is that sense of completion in another being which lovers feel.

Rome had been good for Eleanor; its vast impersonality overshadowed her regret as it does all the joys and all the sorrows of everybody who has ever gone there. In Florence, every ecstasy, every sigh, every tear and prayer of centuries, is still in the air; and the immortal work done there absorbs no more of the pilgrim's thought than the spiritual struggles of the men and women who did it. In Rome, no worker, no ruler, no guest, has other significance than in what use the eternal, sovereign city deigned to make of his abilities; all he aspired to be, and was not, comforts no one. Of ten thousand who gape wonderingly about the Sistine Chapel, perhaps one remembers that there Michelangelo turned from his painting on a certain day, and looked for the first time on Vittoria Colonna. Of those who stand, guide-book in hand, by Raphael's tomb in the Pantheon, how many care that the "betrothed" who shares with him that august burial, was not the woman he loved and immortalised, for whom he made the century of sonnets, but one forced on him by the irresistible demands of his cardinal-patron? Only one personality has left upon Rome an im-

press ineffaceable—only one: a consumptive English boy who died, railing bitterly, in a tiny room outlooking on the Spanish Steps. Keats defies Rome to overshadow him; his last lodging and his low-lying grave, all but outrank the whole long line of Cæsars, in the tribute paid; Florence could not have given him a securer shrine. Save him, the imperial mother of civilisation permits no one in her court to be thought of other than as one whom her grandeur dignifies—Keats' splendid despair she cannot make subservient.

Eleanor tried not to indulge herself in the contemplation of anything which might magnify her sense of loneliness; she sought out, rather, Rome's myriad reminders of man's fleet little day. Where ninety generations have loved and laboured, wept and sung, and left such scanty record of it all, one must greatly lack feeling for proportion who regards his individual disappointment as cataclysmic. Rome engages and transports; Rome awes but also it satisfies. There is a spaciousness, where every day is added to a tale of twenty-six or seven centuries, that gets into the soul—if the soul will. It was just the thing for Eleanor—for six months. Then she was ready for Paris, which makes much account of everybody's moods and denies the importance of none.

Early in April she established herself in a lodging in the Quartier St. Germain and prepared to live in a way she had long desired to try. She found a nobly-proportioned big room in a fine old house with seventeenth-century stateliness about it, and water and gas on each floor for twentieth-century needs. It was her purpose to furnish this room—she had never created a background for herself, though she ardently believed in the value of that experience—and to have, thus, a definite object in her excursions through antique shops, and others. For her meals, she would pursue that varied course which Paris so facilitates: she would cook a little for herself, or fetch in and set forth cooked foods, or adventure among the thousand-and-one eating-

places where all the world finds meat and drink and the perpetually enacting human comedy.

The room lacked many comforts, but it had two great compensations: a fireplace, and a view; it overlooked the enchanting old gardens of the Couvent du Sacré Cœur, and the gold dome above Napoleon's dust, and far away across the Seine toward the obelisk in the Place de la Concorde, and the treetops of the "Elysian Fields." This means that the stairs to it were many. But why live in Paris if one dislikes stairs?

Eleanor entered her domain through a postern door in the great, gate-like portal which no longer swung wide to admit link-boys and the bearers of miladi's Vernis Martin *chaise*, or scarlet-coated postilions and the creaking great carriages of a later *noblesse*. The wife of the concierge usually admitted her, if the postern were closed, and delivered to her mail and parcels and visiting cards and messages. The domicile of this indefatigable one was in the rooms just within the entrance, on the left. There, secure against the most inquisitive sun-ray or straying wisp of air, she maintained household gods so numerous that they seemed to grudge her bulky person room even to sit—movement except the most carefully calculated, was interdict; Eleanor wondered if no catastrophe ever depleted the possessions of a concierge, and how so many crocheted tidies and blue glass vases and pampas grasses and mica-strewn picture cards and faded photographs could accrue to one family, even in many generations. In this atmosphere of memorabilia, haunted by the ghosts of ten thousand cabbages, Madame Pousset and her venerable cat, Mimi, kept watch and ward over all comings and goings. Across the entrance-way from their door, was the main stairway to the upper floors. The ground-floor rooms on the big court had indeed succumbed to industry—so that a relict of the Second Empire, coming to call on the similar relict who lived on the second floor, was quite likely to collide in the doorway with a smocked lad carrying freshly

dyed and curled feathers to the Bon Marché or an upholsterer's assistant bringing a sofa to be cured of its gaping wounds—but the upper floors were of a selectness unapproachable, as Madame Pousset said.

The shadowy halls were full of mystery to Eleanor; the creaking stairs echoed to footfalls of many days gone by; wraiths of old loves, old vanities, old feuds, plucked at her sleeves, imploringly, as she passed.

From her high windows she could scan, past uncounted hosts of chimney pots, more backgrounds of romance than any mind in one brief lifetime can apprehend; and sunsets from April to October were well within her eyes' scope.

So leisurely was she about her purchases, that when Stephen arrived in May instead of July as his first plan was, her home-making had not got far beyond a cot-bed which became a couch by day, a few simple toilet arrangements, a small, two-burner gas stove, and some rather ingenious arrangements for her cuisine.

Stephen was landed at Cherbourg, at the usual hour of ten-something P. M., and got away from there about midnight. The compartment he had secured on the *wagon-lit*, he gallantly surrendered to a lady with two small children but without foresight enough to make any reservation for herself. So, after a cramping night in an ill-ventilated and too-full compartment, he was set down at the Gare St. Lazare about six o'clock of a May morning.

There were not enough cabs, and he had to wait some time. The hotel to which he had sent a wireless engaging accommodation, was full—Paris hotels were always full!—and could not give him a room until later in the day. But trifles like these were without power to irritate. Paris was vast and strange and had prepared no welcome for him; yet it seemed to him to lack nothing—for She was in it.

Gaily he accepted the men's wash-room as a temporary place for freshening up; genially he waited for the hotel barber to arrive; with gusto he attacked his coffee and croissant rolls and fresh eggs boiled three minutes. Still it

was not quite nine o'clock, and "all Paris" (so far as he had seen it) seemed to have been rudely shaken from its slumbers by his untimely approach.

He wondered what was the earliest moment at which he could with any seemliness present himself before his Lady. Of a liveried individual at the hotel's principal door, he inquired how long it would take to drive to—Napoleon's tomb (she had written that she was not far from there); and the liveried individual, secretly amused at this American's impatience to begin the tourist's round, had told him he could drive there in ten or fifteen minutes but that he could not get in until after twelve o'clock.

"Monsieur, if time is short for Paris, could go at once to the Louvre, and after that to the tomb of Napoleon."

Stephen smiled—and rewarded.

"I am not pressed—like that," he said.

He went for a walk along the Avenue des Champs-Élysées. In so far as her shops were concerned, and her throngs, that imperatrice of thoroughfares was still *en dishabille*. But like many another charmer, she was no whit the less attractive therefore; her beauty stands the early-morning test. Particularly after he passed Rond-Point, approaching the Place de la Concorde, did it seem to Stephen that he had never seen green before—as, in Italy, he knew that he had never before seen blue. The Springtime was born in France; and not all her stone and mortar and chimney-pots can keep Paris from being Spring's Capital.

At the Avenue Alexandre III., he stood transfixed by the vista. Then, his heart beating high, he started toward that gilded dome behind which he should find his Love.

Straight to its intersection with her street, he followed the Boulevard des Invalides. Now it was a quarter to ten. Could he wait any longer? No, he could not! He managed, somehow, to make Madame Pousset understand whom he desired to see.

"Cinquième etage," she said, and nodded toward the doors which opened upon the stairway.

Stephen stared; and she held up the five fingers of her right hand, while pointing skyward with the index-finger of her left. So he started to climb.

Eleanor had not yet moved into this place when she wrote him that letter which reached him at the steamer; her description of it dealt principally with the view, the convent garden, and the dome of the emperor's last resting-place. He was unacquainted with any conditions of foreign living save hotels and the Florence pension; and the strangeness of these surroundings rather terrified him—not for himself, but for Eleanor.

On the fifth-floor landing were many doors; but he finally made out her name on one of them, and knocked. A moment later she was in his arms.

What might well have surprised them, but did not, was the unchallenged ecstasy with which, after months of renunciatory philosophy, he reached out to grasp her and she reached out to cling against his breast. Sometimes, their sense of belonging each to the other, was so much stronger than any restraint to which their minds subscribed, that they were truly unaware of aught but their undeniable unity.

"I thought you'd never come!" she cried.

And, wryly, Stephen cursed the minutes he had spent in needless dalliance.

He looked about the big, bare room unfavourably.

"What's the idea of this, Childie?" he besought her, holding her still close against him with his encircling left arm, and assuming a care-taking tone that made her heart most glad.

She made a saucy little *moue* at him.

"The same sort of an idea that you had, Mister, when you went into Mexico: it's what I've always dreamed of doing; it's my adventure in the land of Romance."

"But you're not comfortable—you can't be," he objected.

"Were you?" she quizzed, laughingly.

"The cases," he declared, "are not parallel. But we won't

argue that. Come on, now—tell Father all about this project. Where do you sleep?"

She pointed to the cot.

"Temporarily, on that—while I'm hunting a darling old French or Italian day-bed."

"And where do you eat?"

She showed him the ingenuities of her alcove kitchenette, and told of a dozen different screens she was considering, in as many fusty little shops, to shut from view her cuisine utilities.

"You've got them all to look at," she warned, "and a hundred other things besides. We're going to prowl in every musty, dusty old corner of this adorable treasure island, as well as play out in the Springtime. And you're going to be so ashamed, pretty soon, when you remember how disrespectfully you spoke of my adventure! Did I ever sniff at your patient wooing of the Mexican hills?"

"You never did," he granted her. "And I beg your pardon right here and now. You ought to chuck me out for clucking about your comforts. I do know there are much more important things. Please give me another chance."

"Well," she assented, "since you're so contrite, perhaps I will. Come and look out of my windows. Would you, or would you not, climb stairs to have that garden beneath you, and that glinting gold dome, and bit of busy river, and glimpse of Elysian Fields?"

"I would!" he averred.

"And would you love this Robinson-Crusoe shelter, and the great adventure of sallying forth, day after day, and returning with some new elegance?"

"I would."

"Then you may live on my island."

"Thank you heaps and heaps! And will you sometimes come and adventure on my island?"

"Oh, are you going to insist on one of your own?"

A shadow chased the brightness from his face. He knew she meant nothing but play, but her question hurt.

"Dearest," he said, "I wish there were no other islands in the world but yours, and no one on it but you and me—everybody else on continents or mainlands. But until a happier day, I cannot give you all I have and beg you to make it yours. I have to call some things just 'mine,' I suppose. The only things that have any real value for me, though, are those you'll share with me. I thought I'd hire a good car, for the season, and make trips out of here—to châteaux and cathedrals and places like that. But of course I haven't the least desire to go unless you can go too. How about it, dear? Our position is difficult. I wouldn't want you to do anything that might cause you to be criticised, or make people think——"

"What people think of me," she interposed, "is very important to me. There are only a few things I care more about. One of them is what God thinks of me, and one is what you think of me, and another is what I think of myself. I've thought and thought about—us, dear; and prayed and prayed. And the best I can make out of it all is that if we believe love is God's gift, then I am solemnly responsible to Him for what I do with it, and also for what I may help you to do with it. I care very much more about this obligation than about any other in the world. My pride is principally enlisted in being worthy of this great, big, wonderful thing that has come into my life, my *eternal* life, dear! When two people love the way we do, they can't think just in days or years, any more; they have to think of 'forever and forever'—don't they?"

"They do," he granted gravely.

"The way things are now," she went on, "I can't marry you; that's hard, but we can't help it. We hope that some day a way may open to us—a way that we can take without fear and without reproach. But even if it doesn't, you are still mine and I am yours, and there is another Day—a long Day, in a place which means most to those who have loved most. When we come there, I want to be unashamed in God's presence and in the midst of all the great lovers

who dwell with him; I want to know that Heaven is more to both of us because of what we did, for Love. You are over here with me for your soul's good, and mine. I trust you absolutely, dear; I love you more than all the world beside; I know that no man ever loved a woman's best self more worshipfully than you love mine. I will go anywhere with you that you could wish to take me."

Was ever knight more honoured by his lady? Stephen felt no envy of any lover of whom he had ever read or heard. It seemed to him that none among all the sons of men had been anointed to such high uses in his love.

"Where, oh where," Eleanor murmured, musingly, "shall we go first in Paris? There are so many wonderful places—and yet not one of them all seems quite wonderful enough to be the very first of Paris we shall see together. Let's not go *any place*! Only the whole of Springtime and the whole of Paris is big enough for us to-day. Let's lock the door of this little home-spot, behind us, and just adventure forth *into all of it*, and not care where we go!"

This they did, stepping lightly on the winding stairs whereon so many feet had trod, and gaily out past Madame Pousset and Mimi, into the narrow street which the sun, nearing zenith, was flooding with noon effulgence.

Now they stopped to peer into a dark, Rembrandtesque interior where an old man as picturesque as any Rembrandt painted, maintained a hospital for worn and injured copper pots and kettles—all Montezuma copper, Eleanor said, determined that it could be no otherwise. Now they inspected sundry carved-wood panels, of Gothic savour, such as Victor Hugo had so ingeniously set into the furniture he loved to make; and the shopkeeper discussed eagerly with Eleanor those pieces made for Juliette Drouet by her lover's hand and now preserved in the Hugo house in the Place des Vosges. Yes, some at least of those panels had been bought in this shop, from the father of this present proprietor.

Translating this conversation for Stephen after they left

the shop, led to questions about Juliette and her illustrious lover.

"She was the model for the figure which symbolises Strasburg in the Place de la Concorde," Eleanor said; "and she wears mourning, all these days since 'Seventy.' I think I'd rather be here when those funeral wreaths are torn from Juliette's feet, than participate in any other public demonstration I can think of."

"Do you believe they'll ever come off?"

"I don't know. I can't imagine France going to war, even to get back her own. But of course, no one knows."

Stephen was, however, less concerned about the prospects of "*la revanche*" than about Victor and Juliette and their relations of fifty years, and the attitude of their world toward their love.

"The custodian at the Hugo house will describe to you," Eleanor went on, "those Sunday luncheons and at homes when Hugo introduced his illustrious guests first to Madame Hugo, 'my wife', and then to Madame Drouet, 'the friend of my heart.' Juliette followed him into every exile, and the Place des Vosges house has many things he made for her use while she lived near to him on Guernsey."

It was noon, now, and the streets swarmed with workers, out for their social hour and their *déjeuner*. Some of the hungriest, and most affluent, were indulging—at small iron tables set on the sidewalk—in plates of steaming, savoury, *ragoût*, which they sopped up with their hunks of bread; others—girls, for the most part—were lunching more frugally on cabbage or beans. Many bought only coffee, at two sous, to wash down the part of a loaf brought from home. One amplitudinous dame who vended, from two charcoal stoves she had carried into the street, smoking hot fried potatoes and pieces of fried fish, did a thriving business—so great was the crowd about her in the narrow thoroughfare, that a cabby who was unable to drive through it objurgated her fluently.

"Buy me a little buggy, please," Stephen pleaded, "and take me somewhere to lunch. Then, let's go look up an automobile."

"This is the real way to go about Paris, when your own locomotion gets tired," Eleanor declared as they sat comfortably in the *fiacre* behind their rubicund *cocher* with his shiny white hat. "But, of course, a wishing-carpet such as you propose is the way to get out of town."

So they lunched at Ledoyen's, arranged in the Avenue des Champs Élysées for a car and chauffeur at a monthly rate, and—such is the magic of "wishing carpets"—dined at the Hotel de France on the edge of the forest of Fontainebleau.

CHAPTER XXII

NEVER were days so full. Not only all Paris but the whole heart of France, called them to exploration. Not only Springtime, evanescent though eternal, but the beauties born of springtide in the blood of a score of generations, wooed them to worship. They were in love, and earth seemed made for them. Moreover, they were nest-building; for that airily-perched shelter close to the tree-tops of the old convent garden, was Stephen's home, too—although he lived in an elegant hotel across the river. It was his heart's home—not as he would fain have made it, for Eleanor and himself; but as any place where she made her abode must needs be his soul's dwelling-place.

At first, Eleanor was not disposed to let him do more than help her choose. Then she realised that this reluctance was "a propriety" of the sort she must weigh for its worth in her case, and not accept unquestioningly as a standard.

"Call them 'mine' and 'thine', if you prefer, instead of 'ours,'" Stephen pleaded; "but let me feel some part and lot in this. Where's all your lovely philosophy about the development of the home instinct in men, and what it has done to civilise and spiritualise the race? I have never known anything that I could call a home, since I was six years old. I have battled with the wilderness, and with greater emptiness than the wilderness. God only knows if I shall ever lay me down to rest beneath a roof that is more than a shelter—that is sacred to me because it covers all I love. So, why not let me express a little of my longing here?"

Why not? He was taking from no one anything that should have been otherwise devoted. And, as for Eleanor, what was her pride in the balance against his need?

So she permitted the carpeting of her rough, draughty floor, from marge to marge with a soft, thickly-underlaid pile carpet in a colour like good old time-toned oak.

Just of itself, when laid, it gave the room a livableness which Stephen thought preferable—considering the chill autumn and marrow-congealing winter days to come—above conformity to antiquated discomforts.

"Well," Eleanor murmured, smiling through glad-sad tears at him, "now your home instinct is developed by the extent of about an acre of carpet, how do you feel?"

"Almost," he replied, "like an 'early man,' bringing home soft, furry pelts to keep my lady's feet warm. And if you don't treat me kindly, I shall take my acre of carpet elsewhere."

"And if I *do* treat you kindly," she teased, "shall you think it is you or the carpet I am striving to keep?"

"Dear me!" he cried, tragi-comically, "now I shall never know—shall I?"

"I told you," she warned, "that the property element complicated love for many people."

Having his own way about that "acre of carpet" gave him, she charged, a lordly air; induced absurd ambitions toward carved dower-chests and high-backed old settles to flank the fireplace, and tall cabinets converted from Breton cupboard-beds, a supervenerable refectory table—its long stretcher worn thin by the scraping of many feet—and certain Gothic chairs discovered on their trip to Rouen.

"I have," he averred, grandly, "become a collector—if there are few vices more expensive, there are also few more educational. You need not store my possessions, if they do not suit you."

"Dearest," she murmured, "you are as depraved as a husbandly thrush coming home from each wayfaring with a choice bit in his beak for the nest he's a-building. Yet this whole procedure would be almost unhesitatingly condemned by any one who knew about it. Hardly any one would see the difference between this shrine where you

worship all-that-might-have-been, and the lair of a Cyprienne. We know that this is holy ground. But it hurts to think what most people would consider it."

"I thought," Stephen ventured, gently, "that you might be overestimating your ability to—to do things in spite of what 'most people would say'——"

"I'm not!" she cried, determinedly. "Every lover since love began, has had to face it. I hope I'm not so much weaker than the weakest of them, that I can't. But they did 'wobble' sometimes! You'd know it if you'd read their letters as I have."

She was making an omelet, for the déjeuner he had come to take with her before they made an early start for Compiègne; and Stephen was entrusted with the picking over of the fragrant wood strawberries they were to have with a small brown earthen jar of *crème fraîche*. The coffee was bubbling in its percolator; and the refectory table was flower-decked and set with antique drawn-linens and quaint peasant dishes from Quimper. Fresh butter and flakey croissants, omelet and fresh asparagus, with coffee and lastly the fruit of the gods, was to be their menu. Eleanor was wearing an apron more like a studio smock of unbleached linen than suggestive of "frills," but it was of the essence of domesticity in Stephen's taste; and above its neckline, at the back, there was a spot most irresistible, where her hair curled warmly up from her white neck—Stephen had stooped a dozen times, while helping her, to drop a kiss there when her head was bent.

He put down his berries, now, and came over and enfolded her. All that was best in him was outraged by the thought that any one in the world could think ill of what he did for her who had done so much for him.

"I can't bear, Madonna," he said, "to have you hurt because you love me."

"I'm not hurt," she protested, valiantly.

"Not in your own eyes?"

"No."

"Because," he urged, "I'd rather die a thousand deaths than have that happen. Will you make me the solemnest promise you know how to make, that you will never let your tenderness for me lead you beyond where your best sense of dignity would halt you?"

He held her at arm's length from him, compelling by his earnestness her gaze to meet his.

"I promise," she whispered; and drooped her head on his breast.

Then he relinquished her to the beating of her eggs, and the little feast proceeded in more care-free tone.

As a matter of fact, the acre of carpet was the only outlay that involved any considerable sum. The pieces of old furniture, each their own delighted discovery, cost less than shoddy, shiny new stuff would have cost, and much of it Eleanor bought with her "own penny," as she called it. Her Italian trophies fitted into the scheme harmoniously, and with bits of old French bric-a-brac picked up here and there, made an atmosphere exquisitely their own—because everything in it was redolent of their joint memories, remindful of beautiful adventures they had shared—but also quite remarkably mellowed by noble suggestiveness of times long past but not dead. Old backgrounds comfort sensitive souls, because they breathe—in a world too full of haste and change—the continuity of life, the permanence of the great affections and aspirations. All that Stephen had responded to in his *Graphic* picture, was potent here—all but the child-element. The books they read together, and talked about; pictures of loved things and places; souvenirs of all their blissful days.

The walls and high ceiling of the room were a warm, pinkish sandstone colour. Here and there among the old-brown of the furniture there was a re-upholstered bit in faded Venetian rose or soft Italian grey-blue. A painted terra-cotta bust of Maria Strozza (from the Manafattura di Signa, near Florence) sat on the high bookcase and lent that great lady's serenity to all she looked down on.

The refectory table was also a library table by turns, with a "runner" of antique Venice velvet, and a lamp shaped like an Etruscan urn beneath a shade of rose-lined amethyst. The small sideboard or side-table, with its long strip of hand-spun, hand-woven linen crash and its quaint, covered compote of amber Murano glass, always brought to Stephen's mind the Palazzo Davanzati.

For the summer, Eleanor had banked her fireplace with living green so that it somewhat resembled a wall fountain; and on the hearth she had a shell-shaped cement basin fringed with small ferns and furnished with moss and pebbles among which bright gold-fish swam. There was a cement fernery in the space between the windows, also—thus the outdoor world seemed not too remote.

Eleanor's day-bed, spread with silk the colour of old Burgundy, and strewn with pillows in the chromes the Italian masters loved; the Breton cupboard, used as an *armoire* these, and the things named, were the chief furnishings. Of inconveniences there was no lack; but Eleanor rather liked than disliked the necessity for having to make some shift, exercise some ingenuity.

Her housewifely cares kept her occupied, usually, until well on toward ten o'clock, mornings. Sometimes Stephen arrived in time to help with the latter part of them; and he was surprisingly adept at it.

Their days had infinite variety. If they felt like going to a salon or a museum, they went—most frequently in the morning—for a couple of hours. After this, they all-but invariably drove into the country for a long jaunt on the "wishing carpet"—to Mantes or Meaux or Rambouillet or Chantilly or Fontainebleau. They seldom dined in town. If they loitered late in the Bois or the Luxembourg or the Tuileries, they dined at St. Germain-en-Laye, or at Versailles, or as far afield even as the valley of the Chevreuse. Twice a week, or thereabouts, they left Paris as early as eight or nine o'clock and reached in ample time for early *déjeuner* such places as Chartres or Beauvais or Laon or

Amiens or Pierrefonds or Les Andelys, or Coucy-le-château; or carried luncheon with them and ate it in the forest near Barbizon or Chantilly or Compiègne.

When it was not too warm they wandered in the streets, watching people or locating sites of historic happenings, or following the trail of some romance.

Now it was Balzac: the tall house in the rue Lesdiguières close to the Place de la Bastille, where the ardent lad of nineteen established himself in a leaky garret when he came up from Tours with, as he said, a conflagration in his brain; thence to that eminence in Père-Lachaise where, surrounded by simple stones with "great names that tell all and set the passer-by to dreaming," the garret boy looked down on Paris whose heart he meant to reveal. And now he lies there where he was wont to sit, in the grave over which Victor Hugo cried "It is not the end—it is the beginning!" and the one word, *Balzac*, "tells all, and sets the passer-by to dreaming" more dreams than the world ever knew until Balzac immortalised "*Le Comedie Humaine*." The story of his long years of love and waiting made him seem especially their own; and with his letters to Madame Hanska as their guide they traced his footsteps in Paris, to the house at rue Balzac and the rue du Faubourg St. Honoré where he died soon after the marriage he had desired for eighteen years.

Now it was the French Revolution that absorbed them. Standing beside the superb bronze of Camille Desmoulins, near where he mounted his chair at Café Foy on Sunday the twelfth of July, 1789, and with his impassioned denunciation of Neckar's banishment started the demonstration which resulted, in the dawn of Tuesday, in the demolition of the Bastille, Stephen and Eleanor talked of that cataclysm in which the gentlest perished and the brutalest flourished and for long years nothing seemed to have been achieved by it all but a more absolute monarchism than was destroyed. Even then they could not quite know unto what that welter of blood had baptised France. But they passed out of the

green gardens with their white statues and flashing fountains, into the rue de Richelieu, and thence along the Grands Boulevards to the site of the Bastille.

The Marais quarter was a thousand story-books; the Latin quarter ten thousand. They met Dante coming from Mass at St. Julien-le-Pauvre, and followed his gaunt figure to 218 rue St. Jaques, where he went to visit friends. They loitered near the Poterne Barbette, where Louis of Orleans had been supping guiltily with Isabeau, his infamous sister-in-law, when he was summoned out to be murdered by the minions of Jean San-Peur of Burgundy. And they glanced, as did François Premier, up at the window in the Gothic tower in that same street where he first saw Diane de Poitiers. They lurked before 28 rue des Tournelles, to spy upon those Paris gallants who could not keep away from Ninon de l'Enclos; and they unhesitatingly accompanied Voltaire to call on Adrienne Lecouvreur in Rue Visconti, close to where Racine had died.

Then there was always the sheer beauty of Paris, some of which is apparent to every eye but much of which only her lovers know: such as the view of Notre Dame from a row-boat beneath the Pont de la Tournelle—in the early morning if one cares most for direct lighting on the marvellous flying buttresses of the apse; in the sunset hour if one prefers them in silhouette; and again, such as one sees who stands, at the well-chosen time, where rue Lafitte starts northward from the Boulevard des Italiens, and up that dark, narrow canyon, beholds—in air, seemingly in the clouds—the domes and minarets of Sacré Cœur, incredibly, dazzlingly white and unearthly, like a dream that might have escaped, momentarily, from the brain of some caliph in exile. No one, after a first glance, expects to see it again.

The river at night; the colourful gaiety of the bird and flower markets, close by the place where Abelard learned to love Héloïse; the cloistral streets of the Ile St. Louis; a change of loveliness for every change of mood is there.

And always, flowing through every scene, swiftly or sluggishly, the human current.

Who knows you, Paris, that descends on you for a fevered week, and pecks at your "principal attractions"? Who, even of your life-long lovers, knew you so that you held no surprise in store for him in August, 1914?

In all these places Stephen talked with Eleanor on almost every subject from Roman thermæ to the tight skirts of the hour—almost everything but Lucile. Nothing suggested her; she was as distant as if she'd been on Uranus. But Eleanor could feel the effect in Stephen's mood, try as he might to hide it, on those days when he had received Lucile's weekly letter, and answered it.

There was not, in those letters from Los Angeles, a hint of anything to indicate the slightest change in Lucile's attitude; they were usually rather rapturous in tone, as they catalogued her goings and comings among the people she was so eager to associate with; of the emptiness of their uncouth endearments, Lucile was all-too-evidently unaware. In her mind, the saying of certain words considered appropriate to certain occasions, was somehow counted to one for proof of right feeling. She was like the persons who devoutly say "Thy Kingdom come," and think they mean it, nor ever suspect how determinedly they oppose its coming.

Her "darling honey-boy" salutations, and "bushels of love" farewells, were a sort of litany with her; she would no more have omitted them than she would have neglected to say her prayers. For who could tell what expression of His injured feelings God might make?

Stephen knew, now, that there was no folly less justifiable than hoping that Lucile would ever be different. Caterpillars do indeed become, in due course, butterflies; that is nature's way of making butterflies. But pint flasks of stale water do not suddenly become fountains, like that of Trevi, fed by ever-living springs. He had no hope for Lucile—

much less hope of happiness through her. If he could have glimpsed the furthest prospect of serving her with anything he had to give besides his money, he might have been sustained in striving theretoward. Martyrdom for a cause is splendid; it is useless martyrdom that appalls. "Not suffering, but spiritual destitution" is the horror of a soul desiring to *live*.

It might be the decree of Heaven that he should spend his years in bondage. And it might be the wish of Heaven that he should buy himself or fight himself free. How could he know? What sort of a man is he who sits down to die because he finds himself lost in the desert or immured in a cell? The fatalism of those weary races which accept as the will of God everything, even to the pestilence their own dirt and sloth brings on them, tainted not a single drop of the blood in this man's veins. He had fought and toiled and suffered for everything he had ever desired. He asked nothing better than the right to fight and toil and suffer for each new desire of his expanding soul. Was it possible, was it conceivable, that he had no right to fight for his love?

He and Eleanor talked little of their own love—directly; but indirectly they were for ever talking of it as they discussed the loves of others. The sight of Heine's high balcony, at Rond Point, was more than enough to start them wondering about that strange relation he had with Mathilde; the house in rue Tronchet, where Chopin died, or George Sand's lodgings in the rue Racine, or de Musset's on the rue de Beaune, or the garret in rue Jacob where Sandeau was the accepted lover, provoked discussions of that extraordinary woman's quest of love; the place, in rue du Bac, where Chateaubriand querulously ended the tale of his days, or the site in rue de Sèvres of the old Abbaye aux Bois where Récamier waited in darkness for the Day to break, brought to mind the story of that long devotion. Here, in the rue de Douai, Alexandre Dumas *fils* was born "without benefit of clergy." Here, at 38 rue de Courcelles, Dickens

lived while gathering the material from which to spin "The Tale of Two Cities"—Dickens whose strange fate it was to be wed with the only one of the three Hogarth sisters he did not love and need. Endlessly, Paris reminds lovers how men and women have loved. Stephen never tired of her romances. Under cover of *this* situation he learned what Eleanor thought; under cover of *that*, he disclosed his own perplexities.

He told her many things, as they were suggested by what he saw or read or heard, about the Cunninghams and the Blaikies and the Lufkins; and she helped him to analyse their love relations. But of Lucile, he could not bring himself to speak; the nakedness of her poor little soul he could not bear to uncover.

After three months of absence, he returned to Los Angeles, with no more conviction of what he ought to do than this: he would not go on living a lie; he would tell Lucile that he did not love her, that he never had loved her; that he loved some one else; but that he had no intention of shirking any obligation which he could command himself to pay. He knew Lucile so well that he was perfectly aware just where this declaration would hurt her, and where it would fail to touch her at all. But he believed, now, that he owed it both to her and to himself to make it.

CHAPTER XXIII

THIS return to Los Angeles bore little outward difference from the last. There was, however, no lingerie—Stephen believed he had never seen the last lot since its presentation; he had, but had not recognised it in its too-much-blued, too-much-starched, badly ironed, and ribbonless state—and there were no dress or blouse patterns; the others, in various stages of botched incompleteness, seemed to bulge from every drawer Stephen opened. (Dislike of paying the price demanded for good work was Lucile's notion of economy. She either hired cheap, unskilled labour, or attempted, herself, to do things of which she almost invariably tired before they were done.) But there were lace, and feathers, and gloves, and other things which made the most show with the least effect.

But now the contrast was crueler, in Stephen's mind, between the room, up many stairs, above the convent garden and the bungalow he was permitted to call his home, between the companionship he had known with Eleanor and the poverty of association here.

He determined to say nothing to Lucile until he had been back long enough to get himself somewhat acclimated, as it were. He wanted to be able, if possible, to feel the situation from her point of view as well as from his own, before saying anything he could never unsay or obliterate. It took a little time, always after each return, to realise how earnest Lucile was in her belief that he had been only measurably kind to her and that she had been the most devoted of wives.

Not only—Stephen was well aware—would the declaration he purposed making, seem to her evidence that he was without decency or integrity; but to all her world and much

of his it would carry the same conviction. He would be adjudged to have "tired" of his loyal, loving wife, and wrecked her life because of his infatuation for some strange woman. Never, by any chance, would it be guessed that he was doing as Queen Guinevere said: "We needs must love the highest when we see it." He could hear, in imagination, the comments of those persons who had condemned him for the aloofness his idealism imposed; with what glad cynicism they would observe: "You can't fool *me* about those too-good creatures—too good to joke about infidelity, but not too good to practice it."

All this, and more, would be his portion if Lucile talked. And she probably would talk. Nevertheless, Stephen's determination to tell the truth remained unshaken.

But opportunity for a disclosure of this sort was not easy to find.

In Los Angeles "the very best people" favoured separate apartments for husband and wife—as did all Lucile's favourite fiction; only the lower and middle classes huddled together, as lack of space obliged them to. The plea that Stephen had made, unsuccessfully, when the Montezuma cabin was new, he did not have to make in Los Angeles, where his own room and bathroom had been planned in conformity with the very best regulations.

Even in Lucile's home, therefore, and when living the routine she favoured, his contacts with her were few. He breakfasted with her and Eileen at eight each morning, and shortly thereafter went downtown. At noon he lunched at the club wherein, for financial reasons, he maintained membership. Dinner talk was generally of Lucile's social activities that day, or a narration of the tributes paid Eileen. If there was no formal engagement for the evening, Lucile telephoned "some people" to come over and play bridge, or they telephoned her to come to their house. Stephen regarded this as a measurably harmless occupation for the feeble-minded; there were times when he thought the feeble-minded might be better-employed, but there were times, also,

when he felt grateful that the shuffling and dealing of pasteboards could engage so much of their too-great leisure. At the camp, on long winter evenings, among men shut away from most pastimes and most companionships such as they might have chosen—yes! He, personally, had preferred to read; but he often joined in a card game with the boys, there, and enjoyed it. But Lucile, here in a city offering manifold opportunities for pleasure and development, played cards for hours, every day; and Stephen was unable to think of that as other than criminally unintelligent.

He interrupted her on the way to the telephone one evening when he had been back about a week.

"Don't call people over here," he said; "I want to talk with you. I'll be going down to the mines soon, and you can play bridge from morning till night."

"I thought it wasn't safe, down there," she objected.

"There are other things in the world besides safety."

"But what good'll they do if you get killed? I don't see why you want to be so reckless, Stephen. If you don't think about yourself, I should think you'd try to consider Eileen and me."

"I have considered you. If the rebels get me, you'll have more than you've got now."

"Stephen! how you talk! It isn't nice for you to do that way. I can't see how you can feel so—so sort of coarse about some things that ought to be very sacred to you."

"Do I seem that way to you?"

"Well, sometimes you do, when you talk as if it didn't matter to Eileen or me whether you are alive or dead so long as we've got your insurance money."

"Would it matter?"

"Why, honey, what have I ever done that you should ask me such a question?"

Stephen ignored the prospect of tears.

"I'm not charging you with anything," he replied. "And besides, it's the things left undone that make the difference——"

"What have I left undone?" she demanded, challengingly.

It was a warm night in late August, and they were sitting on the wide, screened porch of the bungalow which was the summer living-room. At any moment a neighbour might "run over," or the telephone might ring a summons to somebody's bridge-table. It was no place for a talk that should bring a man and wife face to face in the most searching examination of their relationship.

Stephen tried to think where they could go, but nothing feasible occurred to him.

"This is not," he answered, "a discussion of what you have done or left undone."

"You're cross about somethin'," she pouted, "and you won't tell me what it is. How can I do it if I don't know what it is?"

Stephen got up and locked the screen door, then turned off the lights.

"If anybody comes," he said, "we're not at home."

Lucile began to cry.

"You never acted like this before," she sobbed.

She could not see his expression of wearied disgust.

"I want a little talk with you," he retorted, trying to speak patiently, "and you act as if you thought I was going to beat you. Now, stop crying, and try to behave like a sensible woman. You're not on the defensive. I'm not complaining of anything. I'm sure you've done everything you knew how to do, to be a faithful, affectionate wife and mother. What I want to talk about is *me*: I'm sure I haven't made you very happy—not in the way you wanted to be—not in the way another kind of man might have made you. The truth is, we're not mated—we never have been. You think you love me—but you don't—you don't know what love means! This isn't your fault, it's your misfortune—it just hasn't come to you—I feel as if I'd kept it away."

"I'm sure," she wailed, softly, "I've shown a great deal more love for you than you have ever shown for me."

"I'm sure you have," he granted, gravely.

She came to him and flung her arms around him, laying her head against his shoulder.

"Oh, honey! don't let's talk like this! It's terrible! I don't know what's got into you."

"I do," he said; "and I want to tell you."

She raised her head, determinedly.

"I won't hear it!" she cried.

"You've got to hear it," he replied, firmly. "It is my duty and my right to tell——"

A thought came to her.

"Have you lost your money?"

There was a note of terror in her voice that made Stephen wince, sickly.

"I don't know that I have," he answered. "But sometimes I wish I might."

"That's silly!"

"Doubtless."

"You talk so queer, honey!"

"I feel queer!"

"Maybe you're goin' to be sick. Let me call the doctor——"

"This isn't a case for the doctor. Sit down! Try to understand! What I'm struggling to say is that I feel like a very bad misfit in your life. I don't care for the things you care for—I never shall! And you don't care for the kind of life I like to lead. It was a mistake in the beginning—our marrying—it has always been a mistake—it always will be. We've given it more than six years' trial. I don't want to spoil your whole life—I'm willing to get out, and give you a chance at happiness—I'll give you plenty of wherewithal—we can be friendly, and kind about it——"

It was terribly crude—not at all the way Stephen had hoped to say it—brutal, coarse. He loathed himself. But she made things so very difficult.

He got up and went to her, and laid his hand tenderly on her bowed shoulders.

"Lucile!" he entreated. "Don't! I'm not saying it the

way I want to—I'm a bungler, but I'm not a brute! I wish I could live and die without hurting you. I'd give all I've got, to do that. But there are long, long hurts, and short, sharp ones. Sometimes, if we're afraid of the short ones, we get the long ones—and they never go away. Let's be brave about this——"

The 'phone rang.

Lucile started up to answer it; the servants, she knew, were out.

"Let it ring!" Stephen remonstrated.

But she disregarded him.

He was amazed at the command of herself she showed in declining an invitation to "run over" somewhere. Her voice carried not the slightest suggestion of the woe which weighted it when she talked with him a minute since.

When she hung up the receiver, she went into her own room and flung herself, sobbing hysterically, on her bed.

Stephen followed her. He was deeply puzzled by her behaviour. If she had such command of herself as her telephone conversation indicated, why did she scorn to use it for him? And if she was really not deeply touched, what did she hope to effect by this method?

"If you would rather," he began, in his quietest, most soothing but most determined tone, "I went away without discussing this further, I will go. But if things happen that you cannot understand, you must remember that I tried to explain."

This was far cleverer than he could have been by taking thought. It would not have occurred to him to make this appeal to her curiosity; but it just so happened that his words had that effect.

Lucile stopped sobbing.

"Well, what is it?" she demanded.

There could have been gentler encouragement; but Stephen was glad of the lack of it. If Lucile had shown any tenderness or consideration for him, he probably would not have been able to say what he felt should be said.

"It is this," he answered, sitting down beside her on the bed's edge, and touching her awkwardly but with a yearning which—however—she did not understand; "you are not happy, and I am not happy. I don't think happiness is the final test of life—not what most people mean by 'happiness'—but I think there is a kind of unhappiness that comes when we realise we're not living right, that no one ought to bear unless there's nothing in the world he can do to change it. I've tried every way I know except the way of coming to an understanding with you. If you can think of anything I ought to do and haven't done, I want you to tell me about it. I have searched my heart, my soul, in meditation, in prayer—every way I know—and if there is anything in me that wants to do anything but the right, the highest right, then I don't know myself. But this way we've been living surely isn't the highest right. I know that! We've lived a lie, dear—from the beginning. You haven't known it—but it was a lie, none the less. I have known it, always. I never loved you as a man should love the woman he marries. It was all a mistake! I asked you if you and your mother and sisters would come to visit me at Montezuma, some day, so I could repay, in part, your hospitality to me—and I bungled it so that you thought I was asking you to live there, to be my wife. I tried to explain, but I couldn't—some way. It was terrible—I didn't know how terrible, until I learned what love is——"

"So you've learned, have you?"

She was sitting erect, now, and he could feel her body stiffen as she withdrew it beyond his reach.

"Yes, I have learned. For more than a year I've known. It has been a great struggle, dear—a very great struggle—to know what I ought to do——"

"I can't see how there could be any question what you ought to do!"

Her voice was hard as feldspar.

"You can't?"

"Certainly not! You must have gone a long way from everythin' decent, if you can doubt what your duty is."

"What would you say it is?"

"You know very well, Stephen Bellas, what I would say. I'm your wife—your good, true, loyal, lovin' wife that never did a thing to hurt you in my life. You promised, before God an' men, to cherish me till death—an' you know how you've done it! Now you've gone off an' got yourself made a fool of, by some adventuress, who's after your money an' not you—you can bet!—an' you want to throw me aside like an old shoe. Well! you can't do it! I'll never get a divorce from you till the longest day I live—I don't believe in them—an' you can't get one from me; you haven't any grounds. Maybe I can't make you appreciate a good wife an' child an' home, but I can keep you from makin' a fool of yourself an' bringin' disgrace on Eileen an' me."

Stifling his anger, Stephen tried to tell her that there was no question of divorce under discussion; that the woman who had taught him what Love is, was not an adventuress.

"I'm not asking you to divorce me and let me marry her," he explained. "I'm not at all sure she would marry me if I was divorced. I have no desire to throw you aside like an old shoe, or to bring disgrace on you and Eileen. I'm not only willing but eager, to do for you everything under Heaven that I can do and that you think should be done. But I felt that I ought to tell you this—that it was your right to know. If you have anything to suggest——"

Lucile began to sob again, her head buried in a pillow. Stephen did not essay to touch her. He got up from the edge of the bed and went to one of the windows, and looked out. The night was oppressive. His head was aching furiously.

Muffled sounds from the pillow began to sound semi-articulate. He listened.

"I have—nothin'—to—suggest," she whimpered. "Only—go away—an' let me think. You've hurt me so—I'm most out of my mind—please go away!"

He went. Memories of Vallombrosa went with him—of

a woman, who, reeling under a blow destroying all her tenderest hopes, refused to think of herself at all, so wholly was her thought of him and how he might be most true to his best self.

Lucile breakfasted in bed, the next morning. And Stephen went straight from the bungalow to Blackburn's office.

"I've got to talk with some one, Blackburn," he began, abruptly. "I'm just about exploding."

He looked it.

"Sit down, Bellas," Blackburn urged, kindly. "That's what I'm here for—to be talked to, and to talk. You look as if you'd been on the rack."

"I have. You gave me some bad advice, once, Blackburn—and I've been on the rack more or less, ever since I took it. I probably shall not take any advice you give me to-day. But I've got to talk—to get some things stated, so I can hear how they sound. There are people whose opinion I'd rather have—but I don't feel I can ask it."

Blackburn smiled, good-humouredly but with a touch of cynicism.

"Thanks," he said, "I understand; but I'll do my best. Is it—domestic?"

"It is."

Blackburn listened thoughtfully while Stephen stated his case; he made no complaint against Lucile; he did not say he desired a divorce; he just wanted to know what the legal status of the situation was.

The lawyer shook his head.

"You won't like what I have to say—but I can't help it. As a friend, I could only advise you to forget it—to find your solace any way you can. Divorce has such a bad effect on a man's life—on his position in the world. People are queer; they'll countenance men who are known to practice fifty-seven varieties of immorality, but they'll hound a man or woman to death who asks for another draw in the marriage lottery. If you were to leave Mrs. Bellas, every

bit of public opinion would go with her, and against you. Nobody'd ever ask himself why you could wish to abandon a good, beautiful, devoted wife and mother; every one would set you down, unhesitatingly, as a heartless and depraved wretch. There isn't any woman worth such a sacrifice, Bellas. And if there was, the law wouldn't help you to her. You haven't an atom of grounds for divorce. You could give Mrs. Bellas grounds—but you can't make her use them, and she probably wouldn't."

"Haven't I a single right to live a life that seems to me decent and self-respecting?"

"No right that the law recognises—not in this case."

"Not if I provided handsomely for Mrs. Bellas and Eileen?"

"No."

"Can you think how grateful I am to you for advising me to go through with this thing?"

Blackburn flushed angrily, but bridled his speech.

"Don't be a fool, Bellas," he urged. "Law is made to protect property and inheritance and other things that most men consider of farther-reaching importance than changing wives as your mood changes. Lord! most of us would be kept busy changing, if we were allowed. But we're just as well-off sticking to one, and society's better safeguarded. We all have our little flings of fancying other women—but they usually don't last long, and we're damn glad—in six months—it's so easy to lose 'em. Sign up some kind of a new treaty with the Missus, and swear off telling her she isn't the only girl you ever loved."

Blackburn's attitude was not so different from what he had expected, that Stephen should be much disappointed thereby. Nevertheless, the experience hurt. But on the whole, Stephen got help from it—was put by it on his mettle in a way he might have missed in more understanding counsel.

One point, at least, of the course he should pursue, was

clear to him when he returned to the bungalow that evening: he would not mention the matter to Lucile again. She knew now that, whether he was mistaken or the contrary, it was his belief that he did not love her, never had loved her, and was deeply in love with another. If she chose to ignore this; to deny him any consideration for his years of effort; to dismiss as reprehensible, without inquiry, his relation to Eleanor, he would know as much about her feeling for him as he could have need to know.

He was back at the bungalow before six. Lucile was at a bridge party. He bathed and dressed leisurely. Stephen was not modish. His business clothes were of superior tailoring, but of conservative cloth and cut. He had no taste for colored shirts, nor fancy hosiery, nor gay ties. In evening clothes, he was distinguished-looking, elegant; he wore them seldom, yet with an ease that was notable. At other times he was just an unobtrusively well-dressed, well-groomed man. He had no cream-color flannels for this warm evening—he couldn't think of himself in cream flannels. He couldn't think of himself in silk dressing-gowns or velvet house-jackets or any other of the "duds" associated in his mind with masculine types other than his own. So, after bathing and putting on fresh underwear and linen, he donned his coolest suit of serge, a dark navy, and went out on the verandah.

Lucile was just coming up the walk. She was elated—social intercourse always went to her head as wine goes to other persons', and gave her an exuberance of manner in marked contrast to her "slackness" when unintoxicated—but Stephen, who was apparently engrossed with the evening paper, was aware of a sobering self-consciousness in her when she saw him. She was elaborately dressed, and her skirt was so tight it actually bound her knees.

Stephen could feel the anxious scrutiny of her yellow-topaz eyes as she pondered what tone to take.

He laid his paper down, and rose.

"Party?" he said, in his most casual tone.

The perplexed look faded from Lucile's eyes, and an expression of relief replaced it.

"Yes, honey," she answered. "A lovely party at Mrs. Stoneman's—her husband's vice-president of your bank, you know."

She sat down, and fanned herself.

"It certainly was warm, though," she went on. "We played out on the lawn, under big, striped umbrellas—it was right pretty."

Stephen made such remarks as might serve to indicate that he was not "sore," and Lucile—evidently much relieved—proceeded to chatter about her party.

Dinner passed off with no evident constraint. Stephen scrupulously refrained from anything suggestive of last evening's conversation. When neighbours "dropped in," later on, he exerted himself more than ordinarily to be agreeable to them.

Lucile was delighted.

Stephen could not remember when he had known anything like the dramatic suspense with which, after the callers were gone, he entered his room.

Perhaps Lucile had been acting cleverly, bravely, directed by her pride. The house was quiet, now. Their child was sleeping in her own young-lady-fied room. He left his door open. If Lucile had any yearning to come to him and talk about their life together, she should not find herself impeded by any barrier he could remove.

His heart was beating furiously. His hands shook so he could scarcely steady them to unbutton his collar. He could hear Lucile stirring about in her room.

Presently she came to his door. She had taken off her clothes, and had on one of the coarse, skimp night-gowns she bought for a dollar, and that Stephen detested not for their ugliness alone but for their shoddy contrast with her "things that showed." He refused, however, to let himself think too much of her lack of coquetry for him. If her

heart was much concerned, it might not occur to her that her nightie was ugly and not very fresh.

Almost, it seemed to him, Stephen held out his arms to her.

"Mr. Hornby thinks you're awfully entertain', honey," she said. "He told me so. Don't you think he's nice?"

Weakly, unnerved by the revulsion of feeling, Stephen sat down.

"Yes," he replied—his voice sounding in his own ears as if it came from some far, other sphere.

Lucile came over to him and kissed him in a way she always did when he gave her something she specially wanted, or otherwise gratified her wishes.

"Good-night, Sweetie Lamb!" she said. "He can be such a love, when he wants to!"

If Stephen acknowledged this, he never knew what he said.

The next evening he went down to "have a look at the mines."

CHAPTER XXIV

MONTEZUMA was in operation, with a small force. The cost of this was almost as great as the returns; but Stephen was glad to keep as many as possible of his operatives employed. He had not gone down to the camp on his way west from the steamer, but had dropped off at Tucson and run down to Nogales for a conference with Blaikie.

When he reappeared, ten days later, saying he was going to camp, the Blaikies were not surprised. A week's stay in Los Angeles was as long as they could expect him to make; and they felt they could understand why he craved the wilderness.

Blaikie went down with the Governor. It wasn't necessary, but he was glad for the change, and for the association with Bellas. Nogales was less to Hughie's taste than the camp—more crude, more of the frontier—and he looked forward pleasurably to the drive down and back, and to a few nights in the good old 'dobe quarters. It was hot; but not hotter one place than another. Cunningham was left in charge of the Montezuma Company's small office at Nogales.

Stephen spent an evening at the Cunninghams', hailed joyously by Elsa and Bobsey. He left early, because the auto journey was to begin at five next morning.

Elsa shook her head when he was gone.

"He makes me think of some creature that's in a trap," she said; "some strong, fine creature that has always been able to help itself in every emergency, till now; one that could die gladly in a fair fight, but that resents the indignity of starving to death in a snare."

Two days later, Lucile appeared at Nogales. For some time Mrs. Harrod had been writing Lucile that her father was "very poorly." Stephen went to see Jed, and found him worse off even than Etta's letters described him to be.

Harrod realized that he was, as he said, "about through."

"An' I can't say," he added, wanly smiling, "I got any kick comin'. I don't know where I'm goin', but I'm glad I'm on the way."

Stephen's eyes filled. The bleakness of Jed's life smote him almost unendurably. What had he, in the glad days of his desire, aspired to be—this shrunken, shrivelled, weary man of sixty-two? Could he—had it been possible for him to foresee the long joylessness of his way, its dull sameness, its profitlessness—have mustered endurance to go on, and on, and on, toward an end like this? How kind he had always been! How undemanding, and patient, and true! How unquestioningly he had handed over the wages of his toil! And how thanklessly, because they were not enough, those wages had been received!

Jed was not embittered; but he was tired—glad he was "on the way."

So Stephen sent Lucile a day-letter telegram, reporting to her that her father was undoubtedly failing; and that while he might live for months, there was at least an equal possibility that he might go suddenly. "I suggest," he added, "that you come at once to see him, and stay as long as you can be any comfort to him."

Lucile came. She expected to find Stephen there, and was annoyed to learn that he had gone down to the mines.

"How little feelin' men have!" she commented to her mother. "Wouldn't you think it'd be the most natural thing in the world for him to forget business for a while an' stay with you an' me?"

"My dear," Etta Harrod answered, "no wife ever knows a happy day until she's ceased to expect any show of proper feelin' from her husban'. As long as you keep lookin' for it, you're boun' to be hurt. Stephen told me not to let your

father want for anythin'—and then off he went, like he thought he'd done his duty."

"He's like that," Lucile admitted. "He thinks if he gives you money enough, you ought to be satisfied. I can't make him see how I need companionship, an' lovin', an' other things that money don't buy."

"Well," her mother comforted, "be glad you've got your good home an' plenty to do with, and a beautiful daughter growin' up to keep you company. At least you'll be able to do for Eileen like you know she deserves—an' not be like I was, with you three to bring up and your father so slack an' spiritless. Stephen gives you plenty, an' never crosses you—an' that's somethin', I can tell you!"

Lucile's face flushed, angrily rather than with pain or shame.

"I'm afraid," she began, resentfully, "Stephen's been gettin' gay. He confessed as much to me—tried to tell me he had never loved me, an' our marriage was a mistake, —said he'd found some one he'd rather have—it was horrible!"

Etta Harrold stared unbelievably.

"Lucile!" she cried. "Are you sure? Sounds like you had gone crazy."

"Of course I'm sure!" Lucile returned, pettishly. "I'm no fool! I've been more or less expectin' it, for a long time. When a man goes knockin' around like he does, with plenty of money, there's sure to be a lot of women honeyin' him to get it away from him. I hear lots o' things, in Los Angeles. Seems like ever so many prominent women there have had cases like this to contend with."

Wonder at Lucile's poise was mixed with horror at her sufferings, in the expression in her mother's face.

"What did you do, darlin'?" she entreated.

"I didn't do anythin'!" Lucile replied. "It'll all blow over, I expect—they mostly do. I made up my mind I wouldn't take any notice of it, at all. And I think he's ashamed he ever mentioned it. I was just as nice as pie,

afterwards, and so was he. He said he was afraid he hadn't made me as happy as I deserve to be. He knows he hasn't! But when he got to talkin' crazy about me maybe wantin' a divorce, I told him he could get that notion out of his head once an' for all—that I don't believe in 'em, and never shall."

"Do you suppose," Etta asked in a tone of terror, "that he wants—one?"

"Well, I know," Lucile answered, "that he can't get one—and that's all there is to it. He hasn't any grounds, and he needn't think he can give me any that'll drive me to sue for divorce. I don't care what he does—I won't drag my name and Eileen's into the papers. I've got some pride, if he hasn't!"

Mrs. Harrod began to weep.

"Oh!" she wailed, "I don't see how men can act like they do. Seems like they haven't any sense of decency about 'em—even the best of 'em. I s'pose Stephen's as good as they go. Yet even he isn't above a thing like this. You poor darlin'! I feel perfectly terrible for you. Don't let your father know—will you?"

"No," Lucile agreed; "I don't suppose it would do any good. If he was a different kind of man, he might talk to Stephen and make him ashamed of himself. But I don't know—I believe they all stick together."

"He always," Etta admitted, "was of the opinion that we kind of led Stephen on." She sniffed contemptuously. "And if he was to hear this, he'd think he was right. I've never told you, but I had all I could do to keep him from goin' to Stephen, right when you got engaged, an' askin' him if he was sure he wanted you!"

Lucile's yellow eyes flashed angrily.

"Did you ever?" she cried, aghast.

"Well, never you mind, honey," her mother crooned. "You got one parent that stands by you, anyway. And I'll give Stephen Bellas a good piece o' my mind when he comes back here, I can tell you. No wonder he wanted to sneak

away without facin' you! I couldn't see what he'd be wantin' to chase down there for, when he's payin' so many that could go for him. But maybe—— Did he say who it was he wanted to throw you over for?"

"I didn't ask him," Lucile replied. "I don't discuss such persons."

"I can't say I blame you," Etta went on. "But I don't know—maybe you ought to find out. He might be mixed up with some girl down there. The trouble is those women are always after damages and breach of promise money and all that. And if it gets in the papers, it's awful. I believe if I was you, child, I'd try to find out just what it is he's up to. You don't want a Mexican girl turnin' up with a half-breed child, or any mess like that."

"I don't believe it's that sort of thing," Lucile interposed. "He talked about learnin' what love really is, and all that. It didn't sound to me like it was a Mexican."

"Maybe he's got some other kind of woman down there with him," her mother hazarded.

"Well, if he has, I couldn't stop him—could I?"

Lucile's tears were flowing now.

"Oh," she cried, "isn't it terrible? Here I've tried so hard to live right and be somebody, and hold my head up. And instead of appreciatin' all I've done, he has to go and humiliate me like this! I've always been so gentle, an' yieldin' an' lovin'. What he ought to have had was a woman who'd make him stand around."

Etta smiled hopefully.

"It's never too late to mend, honey," she said. "And I certainly wouldn't let him do me this way an' not make a murmur. I'd let him know what I thought of him, an' tell him I wouldn't stand for such treatment."

As a result of this counsel, Lucile determined to go to Montezuma camp. It was an eight-hour motor trip, but the roads were good, and there had been no disturbances for some little time past.

She hired a good car and a good driver, and reached the camp late in the afternoon. Stephen was not there; he had gone over to the Cortez and Español workings, but was expected back for supper.

Lucile went into his old quarters, adjoining the store, and made herself as comfortable as possible.

Those small treasures of his first European trip where-with he had made of his sitting-room a sort of shrine, had been locked in a heavy trunk, during his second stay abroad, but taken out and set up again on his return to camp. Lucile regarded them at first uninterestedly; then was moved to wonder why he had brought none of these things "home." Perhaps they were "hers"! They must be—on second thought. Stephen never cared for things like that.

Lucile had, all her life, been so generally smoothed "the right way," that she scarcely knew what she was like when ruffled. She knew now!

Blind with rage, with jealousy, with all unreason, she seized the alabaster model of the Pisa Battistero, and sent it crashing on the floor. She jerked the cover of Stephen's rude, board table; and his gondola ink-stand, his ferro-shaped paper-cutter, and all the small furnishings of his altar were swept into a heap of debris.

She was in the midst of this work of ruin, her eyes gleaming as balefully as those of a panther about to spring, when Stephen came to the door and looked in.

"I'll teach you," she screeched, hysterically, "to treat me this way. Where is the hussy these things belong to? Where is she?"

Stephen staggered, reeled. He put his hand to his head in a dazed way, as if he could not comprehend. Then his staring eyes seemed to rest, for a fraction of a second, on the denuded table—on the jumble of broken and unbroken objects on the floor. He lurched forward. There was murder in his eyes. His strong, slim fingers curled in a strangler's grasp. Lucile screamed in terror. And Stephen went away.

Walking weakly, like a desperately wounded man, he got himself to the corral. His horse was still saddled. With a supreme effort, Stephen climbed into the seat and urged the animal out of the camp.

He rode, unheeding of time or direction, until the exhausted beast stumbled and threw him. He was not hurt, and lay gratefully where he had fallen, staring up at the stars.

Nothing was clear in his mind except that he had not killed Lucile, as he wanted to do. He was glad of that. He didn't know why—but he was. He couldn't think of anything else. He tried—but it was no use. He was as if some one had struck him a stunning blow on the head and made him almost but not altogether unconscious.

He must have gone to sleep, because he had a rather distinct sensation of waking, in the early dawn.

Prodding up the poor beast, he started forward, with the daybreak behind him. He had but one impulse: to get on. It did not in the least matter where. But he must get on. If he loitered he might go back and kill Lucile. And he didn't want to kill her. He didn't know why—but he didn't want to. It made him sick to think of it.

The sun grew very hot, on his back, on his head, then in his face. He became conscious of thirst. Then he thought how the horse must be suffering. He tried to take his bearings, but could not. If this was familiar country, he could not recognise it.

Under a clump of mesquite he dismounted, and went where he could look into the horse's face. The suffering he saw there made him cry.

"I'm sorry," he said, contritely, "terribly sorry, old Whitie. But I had to come; and I have to go on. They mustn't find us—mustn't ever! She can have all I ever had but my soul, Whitie—and my love. I'm glad I didn't kill her. She can have all the rest."

An old Yaqui found him. Whitie was dead, and the

Governor of Montezuma was raving with thirst and hunger.

"She can have all I ever had, but my soul," he told the Indian—who knew no word of the tongue Stephen spoke.

But he knew that a man who had been good to him and his, was touched with the divine finger which makes men mad. And he carried him to his camp and took such care of him as the desert's child knows how to take of the desert's victim.

PART THREE

PART III

CHAPTER XXV

A CHILL mist enwrapped Paris. The effect was lovely to the eye, but congealing to the marrow. Times when it is not comfortable to be out-of-doors are not true Paris times; she has many of them and makes brave shift to endure them. But her tenderest gaiety demands a roof no closer-crowding than the sky.

Madame Pousset apologetically dislodged Mimi from the depths of her favourite chair, with its goose feather cushion covered in turkey-red, and sat down in it to scan the items of principal interest to her in that evening's edition of *La Patrie*.

The odor of cooking cabbage, the warmth, the flare of gas behind a warty glass globe of reddish hue, the rather stertorous purring of Mimi behind the stove, all contributed in Madame Pousset's mind toward an air of comfort in strong contrast with the cold gray dampness outside.

The upper part of the door which overlooked the entrance court and the stairs to the upper floors, was of glass, so curtained that Madame Pousset was able to see all who came and went, yet to be not too fully observed by them.

Certain footfalls passing the door caused her to glance up from *La Patrie* scarcely, if at all. Others arrested her attention even before they halted at her threshold. *Diable!* there was Madame Carpeaux, to insist that some one must have called on her and been told, stupidly, that she was "pas chez elle" what time she sat awaiting. No? But of a certainty if one did rap at her door, how could she hope to hear it—with that parrot of Madame Jacquemart shrieking like a foul fiend "*toujours, toujours*"? "But, no, M. Du-

mont! *le charbonnière* has not brought any coals for you. How is it possible for me to say, Why not?" "Ah, Mademoiselle, *bon soir!* Yes, it is of a coldness and dampness. Truly, there are letters for you." "But," mused Madame, sympathetically, "the one she longs for is not there—not yet. She grieves—*la pauvre petite!* She droops. It is, perhaps, her remittance which does not come. She eats too little, perhaps, and that is why she looks not well."

In nearly three months no word had come from Stephen. The last letter from him was dated in Nogales on September 3rd; it reached Paris on the 18th. In it Stephen said he was going down to the mines, and might not be able to get a letter mailed from there as the postal service was very irregular. A week later, Eleanor received a brief communication from the New York attorney in whose care her letters to Stephen were addressed. He stated that on September 4th he had been advised in a lettergram from Mr. Bellas not to forward any foreign mail until further orders, as Mr. Bellas was going into Mexico; and that on September 12th a Mr. Cunningham of the Montezuma office in Nogales, had wired that Mr. Bellas was missing, and it was feared he had perished in the wilderness. On the 16th of October, five of her letters were returned to Eleanor. The attorney said he had Mr. Bellas's instructions to notify Miss Atwell in case of any accident to Mr. Bellas; and that in pursuance of these orders he was now reporting to her that no trace of the missing man had been found, other than the remains of the horse he rode; the animal had evidently perished of exhaustion and thirst, and it was supposed that Mr. Bellas must also have succumbed. Men who realised that they were lost in the desert went mad, sometimes within a very few hours after they failed in their bearings. Mr. Bellas knew the country well, and might have found, on foot, one of the water-pockets left by the summer rains. Or, delirious, he might have dragged himself into some hole to die. All places that might have knowledge of him had been searched unavailingly. Miss Atwell would, of course,

notify Mr. Bellas's attorney if any word from Mr. Bellas reached her.

Eleanor could not define the source of her assurance, but she believed Stephen was not dead. She felt that she would know, in some mystic way, if this world were void of him; that if his spirit were free from the limitations of flesh, she would have intimation of it. She could not tell this to the attorney in New York; but she wrote him saying that she was hopeful Mr. Bellas's desert knowledge had saved him from destruction, and that, certainly, if word came to her of his whereabouts she would communicate with his New York advisers.

Stephen had told her how strict his injunctions were that, no matter what happened, the name of Miss Atwell should never be disclosed to any person. The attorney might have kept his word; but, nevertheless, Eleanor was aware that inquiry had been made, more than once, as to whether any one answering the description of Mr. Bellas had been seen with her; also, as to what letters reached her.

Why Stephen, if alive, had sent her no word, she was unable to think. Yet she clung to her belief he was not dead. The strain, however, was almost as terrible as despair. It was true, as Madame Pousset opined, that she did not eat enough. And it was also true that she slept fitfully and unrestfully. Living alone, as she did, she had little to distract her, no one to tell her fears to and receive assurance from. Sometimes she thought she ought to lock the door of her *appartement* and go to a pension. But how could she detach herself from those objects of their common love? And, if she were to go away, might she not—somehow—miss him or his letter? The impulse to vigil is very strong in some souls—as strong as the impulse to distraction is in others.

Her arms were full of small purchases, that evening, as she climbed the stairs. She was bringing in her supper: half of a small *poulet*, from the *rotisserie*; two sous worth of French friend potatoes—smoking hot when she got them,

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He nodded; and she gave it to him.

"The moisture," she said, passing her hand lightly over his sleeve, "is drying out of your clothes. Your 'foots' aren't wet—are they?"

He laughed.

"I can't tell you," he answered, "how strange that sounds to me. No one has worried about my 'foots' in such a long time."

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She examined his rough shoes.

"Take them off," she ordered. "They're wetter than water. I'll get you a rough towel and you're to rub your feet with it, as hard as you can; and then with alcohol."

He demurred.

"I'll be all right."

But she was back with the towel and the alcohol.

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He was quite gay, when Eleanor fetched a second turkish towel and warmed it, and the first, and instructed him that he would have to wrap his feet up in them the way the darkies in Washington wrap their feet in burlap when it snows.

"You've given me much more chicken than you've kept for yourself," he objected, when he was seated at table.

Eleanor tried to look very severe.

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"How dare you quarrel with my carving, before you've been home one half hour?"

He forgot the chicken—as she knew he would—in the glory of that word: Home; and caught to his lips the hand that sought to serve him with potatoes. The potatoes spilled from the spoon; but, luckily, they spilled onto his plate. There were none too many of them. Instead of scolding him, the cook bent and kissed his forehead.

His protestations to the contrary, Stephen ate a goodly supper, and relished it. He felt relaxed, drowsy.

"Now," said Eleanor, when their repast was finished, "you are going to lie down and take forty winks. And when you wake up, we'll sit by the fire and have a nice visit."

"I can't lie down on all that silk stuff with these clothes on," he demurred.

"Then we'll cover the silk stuff over," she replied, coolly; and produced a Scotch wool steamer blanket.

When she had seen him comfortably stretched out, she drew the screen before him, shielding him from the light.

Presently his heavy breathing told her he was asleep; and she tiptoed about, setting away the supper remains and restoring the room to its salon appearance.

She took up a book and tried to read, but could not. The clock ticked on and on. This was not one of Stephen's twenty-minute naps. But Eleanor had no desire to hasten the end of it. In all her life she had never known anything quite like the exultation that was hers as she sat by the fire in the snug haven her beloved had striven through many perils to reach. Eagerness to hear his account of these months past, wistfulness to feel his touch, longing for further ministry to him—all were engulfed, for this hour, in the surge of joy she had in his slumber. Weary and cold and hungry, he had come to her; defeated, too—she surmised—in his fight for something he wholly believed in, or against something he wholly repudiated—and seemingly stripped of his armour. But he was warm, now, and fed,

and resting. Her gratefulness for the privilege of enwrapping him in these comforts filled her woman nature to the full.

The world outside was ghostly. The trees in the convent yard were spectral, in the grey mist; the gold was gone from the dome above Napoleon's dust, and only the dome's outlines showed, faintly, through the wraith-like vapour.

Eleanor was glad for the cold and the damp which made the warmth and snugness within her haven so much richer, in contrast. She turned from the window to resume her watch by the fire.

Presently she heard Stephen stir, wakening; and she went and stood above him and smiled down at him as a mother does at her child returning from dreamland.

He stared wonderingly at her, for several moments, not at all sure whether he was sleeping or waking, and afraid to put a hand out to touch her—because, when he did, she always vanished.

But she knelt beside him and laid her soft cheek against his.

"Say something," he entreated.

She understood.

"I'm really here," she assured him, "and you're really here—in our own nest, that we built, and that we love so much. Do you feel rested?"

He smiled grimly.

"I don't know that I shall ever feel rested; I've been so long on the way. But I feel grateful that I have found you. Beyond that, I can't think—yet."

"Were you afraid I wouldn't be here?"

"Partly that; and partly that I wouldn't get here."

"Was it so hard?"

He made an impatient gesture.

"No; but I was so 'soft.' Ten years ago I wouldn't have thought anything of it. What hurts is that I kept measuring myself by the chap I used to be—and it was disheartening. Something has taken the fine old zest out of me. I

wanted to get here—I wanted nothing else in the world—but I minded how I came. Ten years ago I shouldn't have minded at all. It makes a fellow sick. I never wanted anything in all my life as I want you. Why should I care how I had to get here? I resent it! You are the supreme enthusiasm of my life. Why didn't I exult in the difficulties that lay between us? I oughtn't to know whether I'm tired or not. But I do! You don't deserve a lover from whom life has taken the spirit of youth."

The strength of her denial was not in vehemence, nor in protestations, nor in soothing evasions; it was in her calm.

"You are physically tired, dear," she said. "And as the years lengthen, we don't react from that as we once did. I was in a company with some military men, the other evening. They were saying how they calculate, nowadays, the resiliency of men at different ages. A man at forty may have all the ardour, the spiritual fire, the alertness, and the experience in the world; but it is a mathematical certainty how much sooner he will tire than a youth of twenty, and how much longer it will take him to rest; also, how much shorter his term of endurance will be next time. You mustn't expect to transcend your body as you did ten or fifteen years ago. It isn't natural. It isn't life. The spirit of youth is always gone out of us before we attain our prize. We are always too tired when we come within grasp of it. That's universal experience. What we have to do is to develop a new spirit of appreciation and understanding that's better than the spirit of youth. A very celebrated man, who had won the plaudits of half the world, once told me that when he was young he scorned the Victory of Samothrace. 'The idea,' he said, 'of a headless, mutilated, battered thing being a symbol of victory.' But when victory had come to him, he loved that headless symbol almost inordinately. 'Nothing,' he declared, 'but a scarred figure could possibly represent victory. I doubt if she ever had a head. But, though the Greeks may have given her wings to indicate how she can fly away, I like to think they had another symbolism

less sardonic; I like to think they meant to suggest that victory is spiritual, and only they attain it who know it to be such.' I don't want a lover who doesn't get faint-hearted and weary—as I do! I want one who gets even tired and more blue than I do—so he'll need me to comfort him! I can't tell you when I've felt as proud and adequate as I've felt to-night. Don't you ever," and there was an appealing little sob in her voice, "get so rested and restored that I can't make myself believe you need me."

He smiled ruefully.

"Dearest, I'm afraid, rather, of the other thing: that I'll be a pauper on your hands—in need of everything. I'm just a bit of drift, of wreckage, cast up here by the sea. I have no money, no work, no place in the world. I'm as naked, almost, as I was born—as penniless as when I started to seek my fortune. I'm a dead man, really—dead to all I ever knew, but you."

"Do you care to tell me what happened—or would you rather wait?"

There was no impatience to hear, in her manner or in her tone. She was content to wait, if he so preferred. But he didn't.

"I'd like to tell," he replied; and narrated to her, quite in detail, what had happened. His reluctance to speak of Lucile was gone. He talked of her now as unconstrainedly as of the old Yaqui who had picked him up, or Whitie, or Hugh Blaikie. In his mind, the bonds that had held him to her were severed. He felt as if death had set him free to a new life. He had left her all he had, but his soul; and with that he was come to establish a new existence.

"Won't the Yaqui go to camp and tell them you're not dead?" she questioned.

"He doesn't know. But I don't think he'll ever tell even what he does know. He had never been to camp. He was an Indian I knew when I was prospecting. He was alone when he found me. He took me to the little camp he had made for himself close by a water pocket, and I lay there

for several days. Then, one day when he was gone, a little party of Indians stopped for water; they were on their way to the coast, and I persuaded them to take me. I had no horse, you see; and they had—as they frequently do on such journeys—an extra pony. We were four days reaching the coast. The Indians over there are the lowest type I have ever known—they eat food that is little better than offal; they live in horrible degradation. But I fished, and cooked my own food, after a fashion; and the first time any of them sailed down to Guaymas in a dugout, I went along. At Guaymas most of the coastwise vessels stop. I applied at every one for a berth; and finally I got taken on in the engine-room of a steamer bound 'round the Horn, for Rio. You see, I'm a good machinist. At Rio I waited till I could get a boat that'd take me to a European port, preferably Bordeaux. But the best I could get was Rotterdam.

"When I fled, I hadn't a dollar in my pockets—nothing to do with money, in the wilderness, and it was safer to be known as never carrying any. All I brought out of there, after about eighteen years, was a khaki suit and a worn pair of riding boots, a revolver and my camp watch, which cost a dollar. I sold the revolver at Guaymas, and shed the clothes at Rio. I still have the watch. And, as I remember saying to you once before, 'here I am'!"

She was silent for a few seconds after he had finished, wondering what she ought to say. Commiseration was certainly not what he wanted. Nor, she thought, did he seek commendation. He was quite simple as he described his voyage. Evidently it did not impress him as adventurous—only as a tedious way of reaching Paris.

"And do you still," she asked, "after these months, feel that you want to be thought dead—want to be cut off from all that you have ever known or had?"

"I feel," he answered, "that, no matter what happens, I can't go back to it. Heavens! would a man return to a tomb, even if it was a handsome one? I feel that it's al-

mighty unjust for me to have to leave all the fruits of my toil and sacrifice to one who never lifted a finger to earn them. But it seems to be the only way. And I'd ten thousand times rather be free and destitute, than as I was."

"Won't they search for you until they find you?"

"They shan't find me. And, anyway, I don't believe they'll try very hard."

"Won't your estate be tied up by the courts for a number of years, unless your death is proved?"

"Yes. But they'll pay her an income. She'll have all she needs, and more. And, instead of a divorce, she'll be the much-pitied heroine of a romantic bereavement. I couldn't have done more handsomely by her. I have not the smallest omission to reproach myself with."

Eleanor was glad he was bitter. She did not mean to help him nurse it; but not to feel it, in the circumstances, would have been so unnatural she would have feared apathy. Resentment is a healthy emotion, if we know when to let go of it.

She told him of the return of her letters, and of the attorney's two communications.

"You wouldn't," he asked, anxiously, "think you ought to tell them I am here?"

"Indeed not!" she cried. "Would I hand over a runaway slave? And who could imagine he had the right to do such a thing? This is your fight, and you must win it or lose it as your own soul directs. If I can help you to see what you want to do, that shall be my great privilege. But I certainly am not going to take your destiny into my hands as if you were a gingerbread man for me to shape and me to bestow!"

"Do you think I ought to send word where I am?"

"I don't know what I think—it has all come so suddenly to me—you've had months to think it over. But what I think doesn't matter half so much as what you think. I should say that time will tell. After a little while, when you get settled in a new environment, you'll know whether

it's a mere truancy or the kind of separation that nothing on earth could bridge, or cover over. The only thing I know, now, beyond all doubt is this: I'd rather die a hundred thousand deaths than hang a single feather's weight on you to keep you from what you felt your honour called you to. The consciousness of having done that is one torture I couldn't stand. It is the only one I can think of that I couldn't and wouldn't stand for the sake of being near you."

"The world is mine!" he said, trying to give the declaration a comic little Monte Cristo air, to keep it from carrying him past the breaking-point. "Now, tell me where there's a cheap lodging not too far from here, and in the morning you shall see a man who's going to begin the great adventures he's always dreamed about."

CHAPTER XXVI

ELEANOR was out early, next morning, marketing for "an American breakfast." Stephen would accustom himself, in due time, to coffee and rolls for his morning repast; but she knew he must be hungrier than he had admitted—hungrier than a man would be who was used to such fare as the crew of a South American cargo steamer gets—and she had convictions on the relation of semi-starved tissue cells to the kind of mental energy a man needs who must begin life anew in a civilisation strange to him. So she bought oranges—half a dozen fine Valencias—and at the *laiterie* she added to her earthen jar of *crème gervais* and her pat of sweet butter the further purchase of six big, snowy-white eggs which had never known cold storage. Then to the *boulangerie* for crisp rolls, and to the *charcuterie* for English bacon. Lastly, two roses, in the delicate pink that is like white faintly blushing.

When Stephen came, at nine, these roses were nodding from a slender vase in the centre of the table, which was a picture with its dishes of Breton peasant ware and its Italian linen-crash runner.

"I shall never, in the years remaining," Stephen said, when he had finished breakfast, "eat another meal so memorable."

And, indeed, even to a man less hungry for food and less in love with the circumstances, it would have seemed a most excellent meal. The oranges, peeled carefully so as to remove every particle of white pulp, and sliced, were of a perfume and a flavour that seemed to bring the sweetness of far, sunny groves. The coffee was like old, old amber, in colour and clearness. The bacon was golden, yet not crisped; and Eleanor scrambled eggs in the way Stephen could never

get them elsewhere, turning them from the pan like thick, velvety cream. There was strawberry *conserve* for his last roll with his last cup of coffee.

This food, charmingly served, and eaten beside a cheery fire, was of itself enough to make a man in love with life. But there was, also, Eleanor—her blue eyes shining as no sapphire ever shone, her skin as delicately lovely as the petals of the roses she had bought, her little all-day dress of navy-blue serge enveloped by the linen-coloured smock she wore when working. Her radiant happiness was so evident she had no need to tell it; but once in a while—as when she laid the bacon and eggs before Stephen, and when she fetched the strawberry jam—she patted his shoulder or dropped a kiss on the crown of his head.

Moreover, a late-rising winter sun was struggling sleepily through the morning mist, and revealing to them, from their high window, the city of endless romance, below.

"It isn't often—is it"—Eleanor said, as they stood looking down on Paris,—“that a man has twice in a lifetime the experience of going empty-handed into a strange land and asking it to yield him its best treasures?”

"I'm not asking so much, this time," he answered. "Unless you call yourself France's treasure."

"You're not seeking me," she demurred; "you've found me. But you're going to ask Paris for her very best."

"I'll be lucky if she permits me to exist," he replied.

She pushed him from her a little way, playfully, but with serious intent, too.

"I don't wish to know a man who asks no more than that," she chided.

"But, dearest! I don't know ten words of French; I have no acquaintance here; I don't understand the customs of the country. I think I'll be doing mighty well if, with all that handicap, I can earn bread and lodging."

"I don't!"

"What do you expect me to do? Become chief consulting engineer to the French Government?"

"If you choose—yes," she replied, coolly. "But more than just that. You didn't know ten words of Yaqui when you went into Mexico—did you?"

"No; but I knew Spanish, and so do they."

"Well," undauntedly, "you know me, and I know French, and I purpose to teach you. You shall learn the customs of the country. You shall make acquaintances. I don't know how much money you can manage to earn, for a while. But you've had money in abundance, and you know how much it can buy you. Now you're going to prospect in a great, rich country for the kind of treasure that no shipwreck or cataclysm can ever take away from you. You're going to ask France for the best of her past and the best of her present; and you're not going to let any hunger or hardship keep you from getting it. It's the treasures of the spirit that you seek, on your second adventure. A man may find them anywhere, I suppose. But you've come to a country richer in them than Mexico is in gold and silver and copper. You may stake a claim to anything you admire. I don't say you may carry home anything you happen to fancy. But who wants to house so many things? Especially when they are to be seen for the seeking, any time. You don't know it—yet; but you and I are going in business together, in that fine French fashion I have so long admired."

He stared at her.

"Business?"

"Yes. I thought it all out last night, after you left."

"I—ought to be able to find myself a job of some sort," he objected. "There's no need for you to feel you must help me to take care of myself. I'd rather take care of you!"

"Hoighty-toighty! Don't snub me so. Didn't we-wimmins think up nearly all the jobs, originally, and work at them first? And isn't partnership in work the saddest need of men and women to-day? Now, you an' me, Mister, is goin' into business 'side by each'—unless you spurn me."

"What are we going to do? Keep a shop?"

"Oh, dear no! We don't know how to keep shop, and the French have a genius for it. We'd starve. And besides, we've no capital. We're going into a business we know something about. You know lots about one part of it, and I know 'pretty much' about the rest. We call it 'business,' because we shall be paid for doing it—paid money. But really it's the thing we'd rather do than anything else we can think of. We ought to pay for the joy of doing it—but we won't. We're going to get a wonderful 'wishing carpet,' and go all over France and maybe Netherlands or Switzerland or Italy. All the places we went to before and want to go to again; and all the places we wanted to go and didn't get to."

He shook his head.

"I don't believe you comprehend, dear; I haven't anything! Not a *sou*, except my ship wages—or part of them, rather. The remainder won't keep me even from starvation, very long."

"Stephen! you're stupid," she charged. "We're not going to pay for the wishing-carpet! We're going to be paid for riding on it."

"Oh! And who's going to pay us?"

"Why, the people who ride behind—in the back seat—while you and I sit out in front. We'll give some bodies the most wonderful time they ever had, and we'll have a wonderfuller one and be paid for taking it."

"As flunkeys to some rich snobs?"

"I thought better of you! I did, really! How can any one make a flunkey out of you or me? They may try to and they may think they've succeeded. But we shall know they haven't. We'll be *Königskinder*; if they don't recognise us, it will be their loss only. For our kingdom is one they can't turn us out of even if their stupidity keeps them from recognising us as the heirs."

"Nevertheless, I don't believe I like you being in the scheme. I'm willing to drive a car, and be bossed or patron-

ised or cussed by some fathead American. But I'll be durned if I'll see you where he can do it to you, too!"

Eleanor sighed, comically, and simulated despair.

"Ain't men troublesome?" she cried, as if apostrophising some one unseen.

Stephen laughed—as she meant he should.

"Apparently this one is," he granted. "But when I chose to sacrifice everything I had, rather than live in bondage and away from you, I took the chance of sufferings and indignities for myself. I certainly didn't take it for you——"

"You talk, dear, as if we were quite separate," she objected. "If you want to be so proud and 'choosy,' you ought not to love any one, or let any one love you. When two people love each other very much, hardly anything can happen to one of them alone. I could let you set me apart as one too frail to share the rigours of your experience; but I don't intend to do anything of the sort. I believe my spiritual hardihood is as great as yours, and I insist on finding out if it isn't. If I need some of yours to supplement mine, I shan't be too proud to ask for it. And if you need some of mine, I shall expect you to accept it. Either we're hand in hand, dear, to take together what comes—or we're worlds apart."

"That's all very fine," he argued; "and I'd applaud it if it could remain a generalisation. But when the application of it means that I drag you into servitude, I kick."

"Why, Stephen! What's servitude? The higher up in the world you go, the more people you serve. I'm a teacher by profession. I want to work at my profession. I've 'toted' people about Europe before. Once I made my own expenses out of the adventure, and a little over; and sometimes when I gave more, I wasn't even thanked. I thought it was very clever of me to think out this way we could each do work that we know, and do it together. But if you would be more comfortable if we went separate ways, why——"

He shook his head at her.

"You're a beguiling creature!"

"I don't want to be beguiling," she objected.

"You can't help it."

"I don't want you to do anything because I've beguiled you. If you don't do it because it appeals to your best judgment, then you mustn't do it at all; otherwise you make a mistress of me—which I cannot allow."

"More than mistresses—more than those usually so-called—do—that way."

"I don't doubt it. But that doesn't make it any less disreputable. We'll make all the pretty play we can out of our situation, dear—and I'm sure there'll be no lack of it—but now and then it'll be necessary for us to be quite plain and earnest with each other; and this is one of 'them times.' As it happens, I was on this island before you came. That makes me kind of hostess to you, at least till you get your bearings. It's going to be rather hard for you in many ways. You're not accustomed to having any one do much for you—you've done things for yourself and for others; and that's what you love to do. For a while, now, you will probably have to let me do some things for you which are against all your notions of what a relationship between a man and a woman should be. Have you thought about that?"

No; he hadn't. He wouldn't have come to her if he had thought he might have to burden her with his problems.

Eleanor made herself reflect what a big step she was asking him to take, mentally, who had been so long accustomed to disingenuousness and cajolery and to the kind of woman who supports herself in idleness thereby.

"The best way to get at the real merits of the case," she suggested, "is to strip it of all its incidentals. Suppose this were really a Robinson Crusoe island on which you were cast up, from the wreck that carried down all you ever had. And suppose you found me here before you—a woman, but a fairly brave, fairly sturdy, fairly ingenious one, who knows where the sweet water springs, and how to meet

the conditions on which life may be sustained here. Would you refuse to let me lead you to the spring?"

"No—certainly not."

"Would you go hungry until you could find food for yourself? Or would you accept some of my store, until you knew the island's resources?"

"I wouldn't want to take what you ought to have for yourself."

"But if I had more than enough?"

"Then I would, I suppose."

"You 'suppose'? But you'd be loath to do it?"

He held up his hand in plea.

"I'm not defending myself," he averred. "I'm only explaining myself, as truthfully as I can. I don't say you're not right and I'm not wrong. I'm sure you are right. But you'll have to be a little patient with me while I try to re-adjust my ideas."

"My dear heart!" she cried, contrite and imploring. "I want to be more than 'a little patient.' I want you to make me understand just how hard it is for you to unlearn your old ideas about women. Mine are not new, you must remember. They're the oldest of all. But I've been thinking them for years—and you have been thinking the other kind. It isn't, you know, that I want to be so 'plague-take-it' independent. It's just that, when my turn comes, I want the right to do my share. Haven't you showered me with glorious things since ever I met you? Did I miss all the enchantment of the wishing-carpet, and make you miss it, too, because it was a great deal for me to take from you, who had no right to your bounty? What about the acre of other carpet? And the Breton cupboard? And the Rouen chairs? And innumerable feasts at every known place where feasts are spread? I couldn't stand a healthy, able-bodied man who didn't insist on doing his full share and as much more as seemed necessary. But, dearest, neither can I stand a man whose pride won't let a woman do her full share, and as much more as she wishes to do. I have a right to the joy

of that feeling, just as much as you have. I indulged your right. Now, you indulge mine."

"But," he objected, "you were giving me, all the while, so much more than I was giving you."

She shook her head, smiling.

"Who can measure? But what's to hinder you from reversing that old order—if it was true?"

"I'm to hinder! When I gave you some material comforts and luxuries, you were giving me the keys of Heaven. I can't reciprocate. If you give me both material and spiritual, I shall be a pauper on your hands."

"Dearest," she said, "if your material gifts helped you to feel any different about receiving spiritual gifts from me, it was because you had not got over the idea that there is any possible rate of exchange between them. They don't go on the same ledger. They are quite separate accounts. Your reckoning with me shows a heavy material balance in your favour. When you become chief consulting engineer to the French Government, you may run it 'way up, further; but in the meantime, I want to reduce it a little, as I can. I hold that this is my immemorial privilege."

"What do you propose?"

"To help you find the best in this new existence."

"You couldn't do otherwise."

She smiled.

"What kind of a place did you find that lodging last night?"

"Not bad."

"Clean?"

"Rather."

"It must be cleaner than that—where you sleep."

"Well, perhaps it was cleaner than that."

"Warm?"

"Warm enough."

"How much did you have to pay?"

"Four francs."

"We can do better than that, with some family—where

you can see something of the simple, wholesome French family life. You will learn French faster if you go where there are children. They tell you when you make a mistake. The elders are so polite they make shift to understand, and you never know how badly you're doing. If we take a little time to look, I'm sure we can find you a room with people you'll be glad to know, and that it won't cost you more than fifty francs a month. You'll be astonished when you learn how well you can eat for fifty or sixty francs more."

"I have two hundred," he said. "I can live till the end of January."

"And you have five hundred francs worth of carpet——"

"I gave you that."

"I didn't accept it. You said I could call things 'mine' and 'thine' if I wanted to. That carpet is 'thine,' and I am going to buy it 'off of' you, second-hand, at a great bargain—although it isn't a bit the worse for wear. And that Breton cupboard! And a few other things. You'll have to take 'aisy payments,' though."

"Are you going to pay taxi-rates for the wishing-carpet, too?"

"No, sir. But I'm going to have a modest little party, once a day or so, by way of showing my appreciation of all those gorgeous ones that you had. And we're going to have good times at my parties, too—if they *don't* cost as much as you used to give the waiter's third assistant. And now——"

She hesitated.

"Yes?"

"And now I'm going to be quite—personal."

"Having been most impersonal heretofore?"

"Yes. I want you to get some better clothes. If you were in the wilderness, those would do. But you're not in the wilderness. And you won't feel comfortable in those clothes, here. You won't feel like yourself."

"I don't know that I want to feel like myself," he murmured.

She looked distressed.

"I hope you don't mean that," she said. "You're not trying to get away from Stephen Bellas—are you? Only from conditions in which he couldn't do his best."

"I thought I was going to start all over."

"Oh, no, dear! Why should you want to cut yourself loose from all that you have ever been? You can't do it, anyway! But why desire to? There must be continuity in life; we must be able to feel the relationship of our days with our yesterdays, or it would be intolerable. Even if we could begin all over, who would want to? Memory hurts, at times; but nothing could be so awful as not to remember. And you have so much that's rich and wonderful to think about!"

"Yes," he agreed, "I have."

"All your boyhood dreams, all your early struggles, your years in Mexico, are as important to you, now, as anything could ever be. You're the boy who did what he dreamed of doing, in Mexico; you're the man who will win again and again, because you've got that same stuff in you—and better stuff along with it!"

"If," he murmured, fervently, "I did not-so-ill without you, what ought I not to do with you to help me?"

"You'll do what you want to do—for your own sake, and for mine. It's in the light that shines behind your eyes, to do that; it's in the way you use your hands; it's in a hundred things about you. I am so proud to think I may be able to help you, that I've no words to express myself. I feel as if you were taking my 'copper cents' and putting them into something that'll pay me a fabulous return. Am I a director, or only an investor?"

"You're the whole directorate."

"I don't want to be all of that."

"How much do you want to be?"

"Well," meditatively, "about forty-five per cent."

"That's not a controlling interest."

"I don't want a controlling interest."

"Oh, yes, you do! It's very important. You may find yourself blocked, if you don't have it."

"The other interests wouldn't vote against me if I could make them see I was right—would they?"

"They might. You never can tell what other stockholders will do. The safe way is to hold the votes."

"Well, then, I'll take fifty-five per cent."

"That's better."

"Can I order a new rigging, now?"

"Yes—you can."

"Then let us go and see about it. You know, dogs are pretty decent—but they bark at shabby persons, unless they know them. If they love us, they don't care how we look. People can't always tell any better than dogs can, how different we are from what we seem to be—on short acquaintance they can't, I mean. I suppose the least we can do for other folks, in a busy world, is to help and not to hinder them in finding out what our worth is. If life was longer and we all had less to do, it'd be great adventure to masquerade and find one another out. But most people have only one chance at us, or only a few at best; we have to facilitate things for them by looking our part and eliminating a lot of guesses—there are always plenty left, anyway.

"Now, if I were not here, or you didn't have 'them aisy payments' coming to you for carpet and cupboards 'and sich,' you might just have to wear those 'shore-leave togs.' But in the circumstances, I don't approve of them, because they're not necessary and they are misleading. You can't look like the Governor of Montezuma. But you can have linen and shoes that look like a man of refinement and some place in the world—and a good business suit, and hat, and overcoat. For some occasions, these clothes you have on will be just what you want and need—they'll disarm antipathy, in some quarters, as the new ones will in others.

But lawsy, chile! You've got a face and body and hands that look as if you had come out of a Titian portrait. And in this fustian, you're more than enough to create suspicion, even in Paris where the elect of earth have gone shabby for centuries."

She had her way—not because it was hers and she was so sweet and so tender about urging it, but because he recognized the rightness of it, and said so.

Before nightfall he was decently dressed, from the stock of an English clothing house on the Boulevard des Capucines; was comfortably lodged with the family of a chauffeur, on the rue Barbet de Jouy; and was registered with the police as Stephen Bellas of Montezuma, Mexico.

"Whatever happens," Eleanor pleaded, "nothing can be so dire as to separate yourself from that honorable name. You have done nothing to dishonor it. You shall not condemn yourself to furtiveness."

CHAPTER XXVII

ELEANOR tried to fortify herself against what might befall, by rather frequent reflection on how natural it would be if Stephen, after the novelty of this adventure wore off, repented of his enormous sacrifice, and went back. She even told herself that she would be surprised if this did not happen. Also, there was the extreme probability of his presence in Paris being reported to American detectives employed to hunt for him. What heroism was required to make her influence him against concealing his identity, no one but she would ever know. But she felt that she could not stand by and permit Stephen to do any of the things a man does who hides from justice.

She said little or nothing to him of these things. But he knew them, none the less.

"If a man," he questioned her, "'must contend to the uttermost for his life's prize,' why must not a woman do the same?"

"She must."

"Then why do you keep every exit open for me, to facilitate my going back?"

"Because that is my 'uttermost' contention."

"To have me go?"

"No, dear; to have you unimpeded in what you feel you ought to do. That is my 'life's set prize.' Having you by me is the most precious thing in the world—except one."

"And that is——?"

"Knowing that wherever you are, you are obeying the best that's in you—helped, not hindered, by your love for me."

"Do you never have a selfish moment in your love?"

"It's all selfish! That is my ideal, and I want to live up

to it. Sometimes I'm not able to think well of myself at all, because you have so many ways of making me think of myself very highly."

Stephen clapped both hands to his head in a gesture of despair.

"Wait, oh, wait!" he implored. "I'm lost—I can't follow you."

She laughed.

"I don't wonder," she admitted. "That's hair-splitting of the last degree. But what I mean is, that so many fine souls have to suffer for their ideals—as you're doing—and I seem to realise mine without anything that's worthy to be called sacrifice. And I know I do this not because I'm so potent, as—as because you are!"

"And you want to think better of yourself?" he demanded quizzically.

"Only," she answered, "so that I may feel worthier of you."

He turned his head aside quickly, and tried to blink away the tears.

"Dearest," he adjured, "if you get any 'worthier,' you'll have me in despair. This is a regular lovers' argument—isn't it? Been going on since the stars were new. What's star, in French?"

"*Etoile. Voyez l'étoile, mon enfant.*" And she pointed up to where the first of the evening stars was pricking the early December dusk.

He was learning French as a child learns to speak: no books, no grammar, no rules; the names of familiar objects; then the simplest verb forms expressing some childlike observation, or asking some childlike question; and so on.

With a teacher who delightedly devoted hours a day to this kind of instruction—and especially with a teacher much more than ordinarily gifted at imparting anything she knew—it was astonishing how fast Stephen got on in the acquisition of such elemental French as served for many kinds of

limited intercourse. His knowledge of Spanish helped greatly, too.

He was learning Paris, too—not for his own delectation, as in the spring and summer days; but so he could make his way about it when he attained to the responsibility of driving a car. It was their hope to be employed together. But he must be prepared against the failure of that plan.

One evening, just before Christmas, they wrote and re-wrote innumerable times, the advertisement they had decided to insert in several American weekly magazines much read by such persons as travel in Europe and can afford motoring.

"I suppose," Eleanor ventured, "that inasmuch as we are not 'coupled' by any tie we can describe to our patrons, we would better not suggest that we 'go together.' I mean, perhaps it'd be best just to offer myself and my services and guarantee a good car and driver?"

"Yes—because I couldn't advertise car and driver and promise to take a charming young lady along."

"No," merrily; "that would attract custom, doubtless, but not the kind we want."

At length they arrived at what they thought would do:

"**MOTURING IN EUROPE:** American teacher, Vassar graduate, much experience in European travel, will take charge of motor trip for party of not more than four. Riviera, Italy, France, Switzerland, Netherlands, Great Britain—anywhere desired. Teacher speaks French and Italian fluently; some German. Wide acquaintance with art, history, literature. Thorough knowledge of European customs. Highest references. Good car and fine American driver and mechanic guaranteed."

The next problem was to know how much money to send for the charges of publishing this. Stephen thought there might be in Paris some representative of an American advertising agency. There was, of course; and thus it was

placed. No replies could be expected in less than five or six weeks. And as much more time might easily be consumed in the interchange of letters with terms and stipulations. That would mean March before they could get away; but that was earlier than most persons cared to go motoring, except in the South. However, they ordered the advertisement put also in several editions of the *Paris Herald*, hoping it might catch the eye of Americans already abroad.

This done, they felt definitely embarked upon their enterprise, and they were thenceforth vastly engrossed with the charting of the course.

They found that certain concerns which specialised in private motor transportation, charged in various ways. For two persons who wished to avoid all details and responsibilities, a first-class car with a chauffeur competent to make hotel arrangements and suggest the principal sights en route, cost about two hundred and fifty francs a day. This was inclusive of everything—petrol, tires, repair, insurance, driver's wages and board, patrons' accommodation in first class hotels, garage bills. Twenty-five to forty francs a day were added for each additional member of the party. Fifty francs a day was the cost, for wage and keep, of a competent courier, capable of descanting on the interests of places visited. For such service as Eleanor planned—even granting her abilities as guide no premium over those of a professional courier—a party of three persons would pay from three hundred and twenty-five to three hundred and forty francs a day. If they chose to hire car and chauffeur and have all running expenses and upkeep paid by the operating company, but to make their own hotel arrangements, they could do little better, if as well. A third possibility was to pay rent for the use of a car, hire a chauffeur, board him, assume all running expense and repairs and proceed as with one's own motor. Those who were experienced might essay this; but the uninitiated would prefer the fixed charge.

Eleanor, considering these various possibilities, thought

the ideal arrangement for Stephen and her, if it could be secured, would be for them to hire a car at so much per month for the use of it alone, and charge their patrons so much per day for all conveyance and guidance, leaving the matter of living expenses out of account.

"I shall have to give some sort of security for the car—shall I not?" she asked him.

"Yes; I should think so."

"And I must join the Touring-Club de France, and make all international arrangements through them."

"It's a lot for you to assume," Stephen averred. "Perhaps we'd better not attempt so much—better stay in and around Paris."

But to this, Eleanor shook her head.

"I know how that would work out," she said. "People wouldn't want to go sight-seeing every day. There'd be days when they wanted to shop or do other things for which they wouldn't need us. And if it rained on the morning we were to start for Orleans, or Chartres, they wouldn't want to go. We'd never know where we were! I'm willing to do it for a while, until prospective patrons find out if they like us and our ways. But not for a regular thing!"

Accordingly, they haunted the annual motor exhibition in the Grand-Palais, that Stephen might study styles of cars and see if there was any he preferred above the one he had hired. (He might have gone to that company, where he was known, and engaged a car to be driven by himself, except for the difference in address between his expensive hotel of last time and his cheap lodging of this. That would call for more explanation than he cared to make.) He finally settled upon an engine which appealed to him as likely to be not too expensive in fuel, dependable in climbs and descents, and so on. Thereupon, he and Eleanor visited the sales-agency of that car, and explained their plan. Stephen was permitted to make some trial trips, with a demonstrator; and when he showed what skill in driving he had, and what knowledge of mechanics, the agents of the

company did what they could to facilitate his getting a driver's certificate from the préfecture of police.

Meanwhile, came the holidays.

They had agreed that, the happiness of having Christmas together being so very great, they would gladly forego gifts except such as each of them could purchase for a franc.

"You'll be surprised," Eleanor promised, "when you see what a franc will buy from curb vendours on the Boul' Mich'."

And he was. For three sous he acquired, from a push-cart, a colour print of the Chartres Cathedral ambulatory, which was a joy and not an affront to one whose memory cherished few finer pictures than that of the choir-carving and the thirteenth-century glass at Chartres. (For a similar sum, from a similar push-cart a few paces further along the Boul' Mich' curb, Eleanor bought him a truly charming print of the gorgeous fishing-fleet returning to Chioggia in a summer day's waning.) For the rest, their purchases were childish trifles, suitable for the Christmas stocking of two who had never lost the child-heart but in whom it was made more than ever precious by their love for each other.

Their programme of Christmas pleasures was very full and varied: visits to several churches, to see the children about the tableau of the Nativity; Noël music at St. Eustache; much sauntering in the streets, particularly in the student quarter and in simple, industrial neighbourhoods; Christmas eve dinner at the gayest café in the Latin quarter; their own feast, on the great day, in the *appartement* above the convent trees; and much else besides.

Love had, for these two, no effect of isolation from the world about them. It gave them, rather, an emotional alertness by virtue of which they became sharers in a thousand experiences which might otherwise have remained foreign to them.

Their unity of desire was such as even Love seldom accomplishes. They spoke of it, wonderingly, very often.

Neither of them was conscious of effort to be conformable; they "jes' nachelly," as Eleanor said, wanted to do the same thing at the same time and in the same way. Nevertheless, there were some feelings they did not equally share.

For himself, Stephen was so accustomed to simple living that he minded his plain lodging, plain fare, scarcely at all. It was mainly for Eleanor and for the nest in the tree-tops, that he railed at his penury. He could not school himself to see pretty things without wanting to get them for her, or content himself to stand with her, in a pouring rain, waiting for a car or motor-bus that was not *complet*, and not think of hailing a taxi. He wanted the fruits of his toil and hardships, not for himself but for her whom he adored. And it was difficult for her to make him understand how little she really missed those expressions of his love which money had formerly enabled him to make.

"You always seemed as delighted as a child with each new trifle," he said.

"I was."

"Then you must miss getting them!"

"But I don't."

"You say that to comfort me."

"I say it because it is true. I'd be glad if it could comfort you."

"It doesn't. I know you think it's true. Maybe it actually is true that you're just as happy—happier! I know I'm happier than I ever dreamed a man could be. But 'all the samee'—as we used to say when we were children—I grudge not being able to give things to you."

"Well," she admitted, "there are two of me: there are the child of me and the woman of me. The child of me can't help loving lollipops and surprises and 'treats' and picnics. But the woman of me can't help exulting to find how little her love depends on those things. If you had gone on as you began, how could I ever have known 'for sure' whether it was you or your 'goodies' that made me so happy? Now, I know! I'm not saying this, dear, be-

cause I think it is a nice, ladylike thing to say—nor because I think this is a nice, ladylike way to feel—but honestly, deeply, truly, from the bottom of my heart, I am so grateful to know *just you*, that I can't be sorry enough for the women in this world who never know a like experience. I'm not saying that I want 'us' to be poor always. I'm not saying that I like to stand in the rain and wait for an omnibus, because the two francs a cab would cost is the price of a dinner for both of us in our nestie. But I'm trying to make you feel what I feel about it. When I stand in the wet while full busses go by, I get cross. When a gorgeous limousine rolls past, with a Dresden china lady in one deep, luxurious corner, I get crosser'n ever, because I'm sure she isn't a bit nicer'n I am. Then, when I get just about *so* cross, I begin to reflect on certain things—and first thing I know, I'm sorry for that Dresden china lady, 'stead of being mad at her. Maybe she wouldn't appreciate my sympathy, but she has it none the less—not because she rolls about in comfort, for I like comfort, too; but because of the chance that she doesn't know what it means to love a man just for himself and not for anything he can give her; because of the chance that she may never have known what it means to have a man love her, not for her body, not for her ability to advertise his wealth and generosity, but for that in her which makes any place she is his paradise, and give the best in him 'the keys of heaven.' Any woman whose circumstance makes it impossible for her to know that, has more sympathy of me than I have any words to express. You are giving me what means most to me in all the world—in all eternity—when you *need* me to help you find the best in you. I'm giving you the same sort of need that I have of your help. What are a few things sold in shops compared with what each of us is giving and getting?"

Almost she could persuade him, at times. But the habit of lavish bestowal was strong in him, and he could not yield it easily.

It was hard, therefore, for him to understand why she thought he should write to Blackburn or to Blaikie, or some one, explaining that he was not dead.

"They couldn't make any settlement of my affairs without telling where I am, and why I'm here," he objected. "So, what good would it do?"

"I wasn't thinking of a settlement," she answered. "I was thinking how it might help to conserve things for you, if there was just one person on the inside of your affairs who knew that you are living. You can't cut all of that past out of your heart, dear. Some day or other, though it may be years from now, the sting that drove you away from there is going to be cured—and you'll long to go back; not to stay, perhaps, but surely to see, to renew association with what has meant so much to you. If Blaikie knew or if Blackburn knew, that the desert had not done for you, wouldn't it make some difference in the way they'd advise holding on and keeping things right for you?"

"I don't know. In my mind it's all gone—all given up. I can't see myself back there with you; and I can't see myself anywhere without you. I'd like to have some share of the estate. But I'd rather have none of it than have Lucile come over here and behave as she'd be sure to behave. If she came and offered such affront to you as she meant to offer there at Montezuma, I'm almost sure I'd kill her. And I'd rather starve to death than do that."

"Of course! And I'd rather starve with you than have you even tempted to do it. But I thought there might be one man you could trust not to tell where you are, or anything about you—just to keep the fact of your existence in the back of his mind, so that if anything came up which he thought you ought to know, he could tell you. Suppose—Lucile should wish to marry again?"

A hard look that hurt Eleanor came into Stephen's face.

"It would be poetic justice," he said, "if she should become a bigamist—after having refused to become a divorcée."

"No, dear! It wouldn't. It would be abominable—for her and for you. You'd want some one to stop her short of it. And then—if, for any reason, we were left free to marry, how would we ever know it?"

Stephen had not thought of that. Amazing! But he hadn't. That Lucile might die had not occurred to him—so "fixed" in her possession of his goods was she in his every thought of her.

Why, she might never have got out of Mexico! He might be as free as a bird in air! His old treasure might still be his, along with his new!

He couldn't get over his astonishment that this had not once entered his head until Eleanor put it there.

That night he wrote a long letter to Hughie.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THERE was no element of heroics, conscious or unconscious, in Eleanor's assurance to Stephen of her exultation in the richness of their present relation. She was truly and beautifully elated by her daily, almost hourly, discoveries of what this experience was teaching her. If she could have foreseen it, she would have expected it to affect her just this way; nevertheless, there was a delightful surprisingness about it—not for the way it developed, but for the degree of happiness in it that no imagination could forecast. For years she had been reading the history of mankind and womankind in their interdependence, their rivalries, their partnership, their struggles together and their struggles as sex against sex. Out of it all there had come to her a sort of sense of the epic values of the world's eternal story. She apperceived the purpose in the drama of creation: the endless issue, from the womb of Time, of souls—"male and female, created He them"; the endless encounter between these souls and a universe of material forces which can conquer and crush, or be conquered and elevated; the endless groping, in the thick press of circumstance, for that complement in another soul which raises the struggle above the mere struggle to sustain life, and seeks, through love, to justify life, to pass on the torch of life, and to lay hold on the treasures of eternity. But the intellectual apperception of this cannot prepare any one for the spiritual glow that comes with the realisation of living the epic, being a part of it. Multitudes of women all about her, ages of womanhood back to the dawn of time, related themselves to Eleanor, as by a miracle, in this new understanding. There was much about them she could not yet share: Mysteries of twain made one flesh; ecstasies of

parenthood shared with a beloved mate; marvels of unfolding young intellects laying hold each day on another of the eternal experiences; the long-wedded sense that they have whose memories as well as their hopes are common. But the sudden expansion of kinship and kindred interests which came to Eleanor in what she felt when she was able to warm and feed her beloved, to cheer him, to guard his sleep, to pioneer with him a new life, was more than enough to make her a woman immeasurably advanced beyond what she had been a few short weeks before.

That, in a long, hard pull, close-companioned all the way with poverty, a woman would have many longings for the soft and sheltered pleasantnesses, Eleanor did not doubt; nor yet that, among the downiest cushions of a man's providing, a woman may exercise a spiritual partnership with her mate and share with him rigours of experience as potent to weld souls as any that economic stress creates. Her pity was for neither poor nor rich *as such*; but for all those whose love is not stronger than circumstance, and particularly for women who have not had the test which reveals what their love is worth to them and to their beloved.

She wondered if it could often happen that a man is able to give a woman so many kinds of opportunity for love as Stephen gave her. When she taught him French, he was like her little boy, repeating her bread-and-butter phrases with the earnestness of a baby who is wistful to talk. When he talked to her about natural science, he was like a father enlisting the interest of a small daughter on their Sunday afternoon walk. When she shared with him her knowledge of the literature of chivalry and romance, his mental attitude was that of an idealistic youth toward a worshipped young mother—a relationship such as Goethe knew. When he explained to her many things which a man learns in his contacts with other men, he was like an elder brother. There were times when he was her lover, supremely that—when he could think of nothing but hold-

ing her in his arms and feeling her cling to him. There were times when the tenderness he sought of her was consolatory as that some men seek of the Madonna. And there were times when they "played" together, child-heartedly, like little neighbours too young for sex-consciousness. Again, they were partners in the great enterprise of bread-winning. And when Stephen came toiling up the stairs to the nestie, with four sous worth of sweet butter and six sous worth of rolls and four eggs, he was like the "husbandly thrush" Eleanor had once compared him to, bringing home a nice, fat worm for breakfast.

Withal, there were times when none of these things satisfied; and Eleanor was much put-to to get through them not as the mood of those moments impelled, but as she believed the sum of all their moods would direct and approve. And Stephen was always grateful, afterwards, that her resolution was stronger than his own—so well aware was he how much more precious in her eyes his dignity was even than her own.

Late in January, interesting mail came from America. There were several inquiries elicited by their advertisement; and there was a long letter from Hughie, who said:

"Dear Governor:

"Yours of eighteenth ult. was not so much of a surprise as you probably expected. I can't say why, but I was satisfied I'd hear from you. Didn't mention this to any one, however.

"You brushed past me, going back to the corral. I spoke to you, but you didn't hear me. Knowing something was wrong, and sensing that the trouble was at the quarters, I went there double-quick. Mrs. B. was still taking on. Insisted there had been some woman here. I tried to tell her, but she wouldn't believe. When you didn't show up, she would have it that you'd made off with the guilty party. I think she believes it yet, although we tried to make her see

that a woman who was living here with you would leave some effects behind, in such a hasty flight, besides a Pisa Baptistry and a Venice ink-well, etc. But Mrs. B. insisted we were all lying to shield you.

"When Whitie's remains were found, I did have some dark doubts. Can't say what the missus had, because I did not see her at that time; she was in Nogales, and I was still in camp. But I felt that there was a good chance of your having got through.

"Mrs. B. had all cities searched and all ports watched. There was quite a to-do about your disappearance, but after Whitie was found the general opinion was you had got yours in the desert, too. The estate is tied up, as you knew it would be. Mrs. B. has not put on mourning or given herself any of a widow's air, but seems rather excited by the suspense than worn down by it. The drama of it, the pity she gets,—well, enough said!

"Her father died about a month after you left. I went to see him several times in the last fortnight or so, and I think he had his own suspicion about why you left camp. The story Mrs. B. tells every one is that you must have been crazed with the heat, 'or something' and ridden off without knowing what you were doing. I fancy most people have an idea there was domestic infelicity, but it's pretty hard for most of them to believe you would go away and leave everything—although they don't know, of course, that you did not take a lot with you.

"You didn't ask my opinion, but I must say, Governor, that I think you were mighty foolish. There must have been ways you could call your soul your own, without going these lengths. May I send you something drawn on my account? You can pay me when you return—for I take it you will return, eventually. I shall keep your secret, of course. I am carrying this letter to Los Angeles, as you directed, and trust no postal clerk there may notice it is addressed to you. (In four months, nearly every one forgets.) Yours to me was cleverly done and would, I think,

have meant little to any one else who might have got hold of it. If you will send others to Tucson (P. O. Box 72) I will get them there when I go up, once a month. I am keen to hear how you are getting on and—if you will tell me—what your plans are. I went further away from home, and have been knocking about for more than twenty years; but I can't see you adrift for any length of time."

There followed some details of the mines, and of persons Stephen was interested in.

"He doesn't know about me; does he?" Eleanor asked.

"No, dear; nobody knows about you except the New York attorney—and all he knows is that I corresponded with you 'unbeknownst.' You might be my maiden aunt!"

"That is probably his inference."

"Well, probably not. But he had the Paris clue. If he followed it, though, he was through some time before I got here."

"I suppose Blaikie thinks you came here just because it was some place to go?"

"I don't know. He may have other suspicions. You can't tell what people think who are watching you from day to day—can you? Hughie never said anything about it to me; but he may have thought I had all the evidences of a man deeply in love with—some one."

"Lucile did not tell, it would seem."

"Evidently not. Although in the rage she was in when he found her, she might have said anything. Hughie doesn't indicate what he made of her ravings about a woman being there. Perhaps she told him I had 'confessed' to her there was a woman. It would be like Hughie not to mention his supposition to me unless I invited it. He's a man of the wide, wide world—is Hughie—of the world where men ask few questions but make many surmises."

"He wouldn't feel that it might be his duty to tell where you are?"

"No; that would be absolutely opposed to his creed of life. I wish you could know a few fellows like Hughie, some day. No education is complete without them. Many kinds of life turn out people as much alike as the coins we saw made at the mint the other day. But on the frontiers—in such places as Hughie has lived—you find the individuals—many of them, at least—who wouldn't be shaped to a pattern and stamped with a value. If you're a powerful individual, you stay in the pattern-loving places and get away with your self-assertion somehow. But if you're not strong for conformity nor strong against it, you drift off into a new environment where 'the best is as the worst'; and there you find others who came for the same reason that you did. There may not be a lot of uplift about these associations—but there's a lot of good *seasoning*. It's the same kind of thing, in effect, that you get here: the feeling that a man has a right to life according to his own notions of it, so long as his pursuit of happiness, or neglect of it, doesn't restrict the liberties of somebody else. Hughie may think I'm a fool. But he'd have to be convinced I'm a dangerous fool, before he'd feel he had any right to cut short my folly."

Eleanor greatly delighted in these conversations wherein Stephen sought to reveal to her the mental attitudes of men as he had known them. He corrected and expanded so many of her ideas.

"A woman," she often said to him, "cannot formulate, in the kind of maiden seclusion many women live in, a broadly human understanding. We need the contact with life as men bring it to us, as they reflect it, quite as much as they need our perceptions and reflections."

She never tired of seeking that viewpoint of his which antedated their acquaintance. It was stimulating to her, and vastly interesting, and she did all she could to keep it unclouded. The man he now was, became each day more wedded with her in all his attitudes toward life. But the man he had been before she knew him was precious to her,

also, and she strove to keep Stephen minded of his value.

The freedom of their talk was an interesting exemplification of the best spirit of their age and class. Each of them had, by nature and by nurture, a high candour; an inclination to include all sorts of understanding in his mental and spiritual quest. And in their eager comradeship, their mutual exploration each of the other's mind, scarcely any subject seemed to them taboo. Stephen found he could tell Eleanor what he had observed and thought, very much as he would tell the same things to a clean-minded, high-thinking man. She found that she could talk to Stephen with rather more ease than was possible with most women. Neither of them had a trace of smirking in his attitude toward topics many persons discuss only in jest; neither of them had a pained shrinking from matters not "nice." They were as removed from the coarseness which has characterised many periods of very free converse between men and women, as they were from the stilted "elegance" which passed for modesty and deference in other periods.

Those manifestations of Gallic frankness which so frequently shock and mislead the concealing Saxon, perturbed these two very little and interested them very much.

They passed, in their discussions, through such a wide variety of themes, that they kept an excellent sense of relative values. It often seemed to them that for their especial benefit had R. L. S. remarked:

"The world is so full of a number of things,
I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings."

And now here were the first replies to their advertisement!

"Aren't you excited?" Eleanor demanded of him, fingering the unopened letters with the dramatic instinct for suspense which a child has who postpones the consumption of a goodie.

"Of course I am," he replied, reaching for the letters to open them.

They had spent hours, since their advertisement was written, speculating on the kinds of persons they might expect to hear from; all conceivable types who could spend ten thousand francs a month and who would wish to spend it on being "personally conducted." Some of the pictures they had drawn of their prospective patrons were amusing; and some were rather terrifying; and some were dull.

The first letter they opened was from a New England town.

"I'm a spinster," the writer said, "of a family with cultural traditions. But I have never travelled abroad, and even now am only considering it. My mother, who was an invalid for many years and my constant care, has recently died, and my relatives think a change and new interests advisable for me. If I go, I should probably take a young niece with me. I don't know how much I could stand of cathedrals and holy pictures and the things most people talk about having seen in Europe. And I'm not at all clear in my mind what else there is to see. I don't care for shops or theatres. I don't think I'd like cafés where I'd have to see people drinking. What I know I like is flowers and blue skies and beautiful scenery. That is why I'd like the motor. What would you suggest? And what would it cost?"

"Bless her heart!" Eleanor cried. "I can see her as plain as if I'd read a whole long book about her. Isn't she forthright and sturdy and comprehensible? And wouldn't she love the forget-me-nots and snows of Switzerland, the gorgeous painted Dolomites, the long, white poplar-shaded roads of France, down through the orchards of Auvergne and into Provence? Wouldn't it be an experience to go to Italy with some one who didn't give a fig for what anybody had felt or thought or done there before, but who'd just kneel down and worship it for the beauty of it that she could see to-day with her own hungry eyes? I'm going to write to her this 'very instant minute'!"

"Don't you want to wait till you've read these others?"

"No. What for?"

"You might like some of them better."

"Well, I'm going to answer them all, of course. But Miss Mudge is the one we're going to take."

Stephen laughed.

"I love your attitude," he said; "you are so kind of *royal* about it."

"And why not, please? I know so many Aladdin caves, and I'd rather show them to folks that're seeking them than do anything else I can think of."

"Miss Mudge might be like Mrs. Hately."

"Oh, no! she couldn't be. Mrs. Hately would never write a letter like that. I knew Mrs. Hately for what she was, the first minute I 'set eyes on' her. She turned out exactly as I expected. It was for the girls I did what I did—especially for Nancy. I hope 'niece' is as nice as Nancy."

She did indeed answer all the letters. But none of them appealed to her as Miss Mudge's did. One of the others was from the wife of an evidently new-rich manufacturer of plumbers' supplies in Pittsburg. This woman wanted to "motor in Europe" with her two daughters who were "just out." She didn't care for the sort of tours usually advertised. The people one met in society talked most about Carlsbad and Trouville, Monte Carlo and Ostend, Vichy and Aix-les-Bains, and San Sebastian. "They don't go to the places the tourists go," etc.

"I know her, also," was Eleanor's comment. "But I don't know the way to her treasures. What she wants is a German-Swiss courier."

Then there was the statement of the elderly banker from Illinois, recently retired and, so, able for the first time to travel in Europe with his wife, unmarried daughter and collegian son.

"That sounds like a healthy diversity of interests," Stephen averred.

"Yes; I could feel quite an interest in them if Miss Mudge hadn't taken such possession of my mind."

The fourth inquiry was from two widows, sisters-in-law, who thought they might like to make a leisurely motor trip in France. Eleanor made a naughty, wry *moue* as she read their letter.

"They're gone stale on everything but their creature comforts," she said. "I'm sure one of them's nervous and the other's bilious. They'll fuss about the food, and the plumbing and the possibilities of accidents, and the 'heathenish' way people live over here; secretly, they'd rather be at Poland Springs, playing bridge, but they've a notion that they're tired of that and would like to come over here 'for a change'. Miss Mudge, please come!"

"If," said Stephen when he had heard Eleanor's letter to Miss Mudge, "she has the price, she'll come—or else she isn't human."

The suggestion Eleanor made was that her "party" sail as near as possible to the first of April.

In three weeks she heard from Miss Mudge. A number of other persons had, meantime, made inquiry, and all had been dutifully answered. But Eleanor "had a feeling" that the matter was settled, even before Miss Mudge's second letter came saying she would sail on March 28th, on *Olympic*. To which Eleanor joyously replied that she would meet Miss Mudge at Cherbourg, on April 3rd and bring her to Paris by motor.

CHAPTER XXIX

HUGHIE'S offer of a loan was most timely; it solved the serious problem of a security payment to the automobile company, the deposits made through the Touring Club for duties and circulation permits in other countries, and insurance of the car against breakage and the occupants against injury. All of this, except the insurance premium, would be refunded when the tour was over. But not to have it before the tour began would mean that Eleanor must ask some one to be her security for the safe return of the car, and that the tedious business of making and receiving back deposits must be gone through at each frontier instead of being conducted through the Touring Club.

In accepting the loan, Stephen wrote Hughie a letter of semi-confidence. He rehearsed none of his case against Lucile, being aware how sufficiently they understood it; but stated simply that as she had refused his plea for a divorce, he had only two alternatives: staying home and trying to drive her to divorce by making himself shameful, or coming away and leaving everything as he had done.

"I came back to France," he went on, "because I liked it here, as you know. I shall not return for some time at least. Naturally, I am not going to abandon all my interests there without some energetic effort. But I cannot tell, yet, what that effort will be, nor when I'll make it. That will depend on the lady who bears my name. Of course, if I had planned this flight, I would have made some preparation for it. But as things happened, I had to flee that moment, and keep fleeing, or I should have killed her. I never knew, till then, what the murder-rage is. I pray God I may never know it again. If, as time wears on, Mrs. B. tires of the situation, a way may open for my return. For the present,

while my affairs are not advancing, they are at least being conserved; and while I am not able to benefit by my earnings of past years, I am getting along after a fashion which is full of interest and new development, and I am secure against the importunities of persons who might yearn to direct my life according to their notions of expediency—not mine!

“I enclose an I. O. U. which I have had attested by a notary so that, if anything should happen to me before I am able to pay, you will not have it said that this note was executed after the supposed date of my death. Make the draft payable to M. Louis Moulin of the ——— Automobile Agency, Paris. This will ‘cover’ its destination. Send it to M. Moulin at ——— Avenue des Champs-Élysées, Paris.”

Hughie’s draft arrived early in March. And on the first of April, they were off in the soft gold glory of early morning on their two hundred and thirty-mile run to Cherbourg.

“No one,” Eleanor declared as they crossed the Seine glinting in the sunlight, “was ever, since time began, so happy as we are.”

There was no bravado about it. They were so radiantly, joyously happy that no creature known to them except a lark at heaven’s gate had lyric quality enough to express their feelings.

In the tonneau of their limousine car were two small valises with such necessary articles as would serve them until Sunday night—this being Thursday morning—and a box of picnic luncheon. (They had decided not to buy a luncheon case until they learned Miss Mudge’s sentiments on roadside meals.) And before them were two long days of exquisite adventuring. After that—! Well, Miss Mudge would have to be a gorgon indeed if she could so deplete their joyousness that they were not still the happiest persons alive.

The Bois de Boulogne, from those least-frequented roads they took, was no mean preparation for the feast of Springtime they were beginning; its forest-growth—unprettified by the wise Parisians—was young; Nature's perennial rejuvenescence was here not the miracle of the new season alone, but the miracle of the new wood replacing that waste of charred stumps the German shell-fire left four-and-forty years ago. The bodies of the trees were slender and full of grace, their limbs had the poesy of maidenhood; and where Spring had blown her first warm, sweet breaths, there was just enough of Winter chill left to hold those breaths like a faint green vapour in the air. Slim dryad-creatures might have moved in that enchanting tenderness, and given no surprise even to the first glance of city-dimmed eyes.

At the Porte de la Seine, where they cleared the fortified enclosure of the city of Paris, Stephen had to have his supply of petrol measured—so that when he returned he might not bring in more than he had taken out, without paying the city tax on the excess.

"I never," he remarked as he climbed back beside Eleanor and safely bestowed the small paper he must show when he essayed to re-enter Paris, "can get used to the idea of walled towns—especially to this being one. Lucca and San Gimignano—yes! As picturesque survivals. But that I'm living in a fort when I live in Paris; that no one can enter or leave a great, modern, beautiful city except by a watched and defended gate——! I can't get used to the idea."

"One could live a lifetime in Paris, or come and go in and out a hundred times, by trains, and never realise it," Eleanor added. "I suppose that of the persons who are halted daily or occasionally at one of the gates, most who have not been soldiers think of the formalities as mainly a matter of the *octroi*—the tax-collector. But there are lots of people in Paris who can remember when gates *was* gates, and walls made a mighty difference."

"Nevertheless," Stephen contended, "they seem archaic now—and I suppose people must feel that they are. Who could conceive of another siege of Paris?"

"Nobody, I hope; but I daresay it's because everybody knows what stupendous folly it would be. Babies roll down the grassy slopes that Paris calls her 'walls,' to-day; and women bleach their family linen there. But I'm told that Paris is the best-defended fortress in the world. And I'm sure it ought to be—with all it has to defend!"

"Where could barbarians come from who'd wish to do it any harm?" he persisted, because it seemed to him that the grip of the past on her was so strong she failed to realise how different is this present.

Eleanor shrugged.

"From over the Rhine—where they've been coming from since Attila."

Stephen laughed heartily—less at the suggestion than at her dark sobriety in making it.

"Dearest," he said, "I think you have moods, sometimes, when you forget that Attila is dead. Come, now! On this quest of Springtime, there *are* no other Springs but this."

"You began this—this fortification talk," she charged, teasingly.

"Well, you ended it—and that ought to satisfy you," he retorted, with what she called his "husbandly air."

The road they were traversing was one of the old main-travelled routes between Paris and the north and north-west—a highway, doubtless, of the Romans who had many towns along its borders. Now, the Seine flowed companionably with it; and again, it flirted off on a broad curve to eastward—either loath to leave the lovely Ile de France and Norman country and be lost in the Channel or wistful before leaving it to water as much of it as she can. The alders fringing her banks were grey green yet, and the water they leaned toward was grey—the snows of yesterdays in those mountains its tributaries

know, were swirling seaward in a strong, spring current. The young foliage of the poplars, too, was more grey than green—the tender colour loved by Fra Angelico; and all the landscape had that lack of opulence the inspired Flemings and earnest Italian Primitives delighted to paint sparingly in their far backgrounds. Timid early-comers among the field and roadside flowers, found their shy loveliness enhanced by all the diffidence about them. Small flocks of youngling clouds grazed on the far uplands of a sky youthfully blue, like a baby's eyes. The bleat and shrill and coo of new life rose from every farmstead and pervaded every village along the way.

"I hope," Stephen said fervently, "Miss Mudge has not got 'nerves.' If she has, she'll perish of them before we get her as far as Paris. The fine, republican freedom with which hens and geese and children, cows and pigs and motors, sheep and dogs and snail-moving farm-carts, contend for the right of way, is going to be a severe test for a New England spinster."

"I know it," Eleanor answered. "If she survives, it'll do her a lot of good. If she doesn't——!" she paused.

"It might be well," Stephen suggested with a fine semblance of gravity, "to ask her—at once—what her wishes are in case of—of demise—ask her where she wants to be—shipped."

His manner was so earnest that Eleanor had to turn and look full at him before the twitching of certain facial muscles betrayed his struggle not to laugh.

"That *would* be a pleasant introduction to a motor journey!" she cried. "I can't tell you why I think so; but I believe our lady is going to prove a good wayfarer. I've a feeling that she has always longed for it; and, while she may have to wrestle with a lot of restrictive habits her life has made her form, she'll fight herself free, at last. I shan't mind if it takes her some time—shall you?"

"I haven't got your attitude toward Miss Mudge—

"Why, you've just proved to me that I'm a goody-good girl!"

"I've changed my mind about you."

"And aren't you ever going to love me any more?"

"No."

"Never?"

"Never!"

His vehemence startled her. She looked at him inquiringly.

"Because," he went on, answering her look, "if I ever loved you any more, I don't know how I'd stand it."

"My! but them's manners," she cried.

"What made you do it?"

"Do what?"

"Tease me."

"Did it hurt?"

"If I had known you were teasing, I suppose I'd have enjoyed it. But—well! when I can't make it plain to you how I adore you, then I'm through—I want to quit——"

Eleanor's eyes filled.

"Dear lover," she murmured. "I want to kiss you. And because we're in France, and it's Springtime, I don't care who sees me do it."

But of those who saw, none was surprised. In France, at Springtide, it seemed the thing pre-eminent to do.

They were always choosing places where they meant to live some day. And now they were quite sure that for a part, at least, of the time when they could dwell together, they would have a black-timbered cottage on the old Roman road in Normandy, with flowering apple-trees brushing their pale blossoms against the window-frames and all the world from Cæsar on passing the doorstep where they sat to muse.

The sun was still in their faces as they approached Caen; and, silhouetted against it, they saw St. Stephen's towers soaring above the empty tomb of the Conqueror.

With only eighty miles to go on the morrow, and no

chance of *Olympic's* passengers debarking from their tender before nine or ten at night, it was possible to see a good deal of Caen, get the car in order, and leave after an early déjeuner for Bayeux; where they spent two delightful hours, and bought a reproduction of the Tapestry—the first purchase they had allowed themselves in many months; and although it was but five francs, they felt quite regal about it, discussing the purchase and its bestowal in the “housie” as splendidly as if they had acquired a priceless old product of Beauvais or Gobelins.

Before leaving Paris, Eleanor had written to Cherbourg for hotel accommodations for her voyagers; and also she had received from the steamship company's offices a permit to go out on the tender and meet them.

It was nearing six o'clock when she and Stephen reached Cherbourg. And it was close upon ten when from the bobbing tender they could discern on the black water the long rows of lighted ports which slowly swung broadside with the shore of France.

When their tender was alongside, Stephen kept as close to the gangway as the swarming *facteurs* would allow, and called, as the passengers came down, “Miss Emily Mudge! Miss Emily Mudge!”

Eleanor was keeping a place where Miss Mudge and her niece might bestow themselves, while she collected such of their hand-luggage as was deposited here and yon by hurrying stewards, and in other ways mitigated the bewilderment of arriving at night in a foreign port on one's first journey to a strange land.

Presently Stephen appeared, escorting two women so bundled in great coats, and furred, and veiled, that it was difficult—especially in the scant light of the tender's deck—to have any other impression of them than that, although they had evidently tried to prepare for the worst, they had underrated the magnitude of their necessity.

Eleanor's cordial greeting and her calm self-possession eased them perceptibly, and when they realised that they

had no responsibility even for their own safety or their belongings, they yielded themselves to amused, interested onlooking in a way which reassured Eleanor at least as much as she had reassured them.

"Seems queer," Miss Mudge remarked, "that any Christian white woman can understand what they say. I'd hardly expect them to understand one another. Are they always cross like this?"

Eleanor wondered what Miss Mudge would think if she knew the objurgations that were being interchanged. She wondered how long it would take a New England spinster to realise just how little and how much they meant.

"They're not cross," she answered; "they're just hurrying, and a little bit excited because they know that Americans want things done so much more quickly than the French can see any reason for. It's a pretty big undertaking to get two or three hundred passengers and all their luggage and a lot of freight off, here, in the dark—you saw what a job it was at Plymouth, this afternoon!—and yet, if all these people were not in Paris for early breakfast to-morrow morning, and all the Southampton crowd were not in London about the same time, they'd make the welkin ring with their lamentations. We're always wanting some one to 'hustle' or 'jump', and always doing the same ourselves. If I were a French porter, I think the very sight of an American would make me yell."

Miss Mudge chuckled.

"Why don't they dock, and avoid all this scrabbling?" she demanded.

Eleanor explained.

"I'm liable," Miss Mudge went on, "to ask a lot of what may seem to you like fool questions. But, you see, it's all so queer to me."

"If it weren't all so queer to you, you wouldn't need me," Eleanor replied. "And if I didn't like answering

questions, I wouldn't try to earn my living this way. Ask all you want to; and I'll answer all I can."

When they reached their hotel, and Eleanor saw her patrons divested of some of their wrappings, she found that Miss Mudge was as full of angles as a Cubist painting. About five-and-forty, she looked to be, and Nature had not been kind to her. Not one soft, caressing touch had been bestowed in her fashioning. Her features were sharp; her blue eyes were sharp; her voice was sharp. She looked the last woman any one would choose to go with in quest of Springtime. But Eleanor was not cast down.

The niece, Miss Amy Fellowes, was a quiet girl of twenty or thereabouts, concerning whom it was impossible to form any impression beyond that she was a human being, white, and of what Samantha called "the female sect."

Eleanor saw them comfortably settled in their room, assured them that she was in a room adjoining, and left them to their first night's rest on foreign soil.

Stephen was lodged in another hotel, and there would probably be no opportunity to "compare notes" with him until they were well on their way back to Caen. But Eleanor, as she drifted off to sleep, smiled at the recollection of a look she had seen on Stephen's face when he said good-night to her in the hotel lobby.

CHAPTER XXX.

NO, indeed, I should say not!" was Miss Mudge's response, next morning, to Eleanor's question about breakfast. "I'm able-bodied. Why should I eat in my bedroom? I'd as soon sleep in the dining-room. And I'm always hungrier'n a thrasher in the morning. I hope I don't have to make-out with coffee and rolls?"

There was little to do after breakfasting but pack up the few articles used over night, and get off—which they did comfortably and without flurry before ten o'clock.

A chill wind was blowing from the choppy Channel over the marshes of the Cotentin, and big coats were very comfortable inside the limousine, where the open windows gave them fully as much fresh air as any lungs could breathe, but the covered body sheltered them from that strain of constant resisting which the open car imposes on its occupants.

Stephen had little need of guidance in driving, here, the highway being easy to follow; so Eleanor, for the purpose of getting acquainted, rode inside.

"Is that man a good driver?" Aunt Emily asked, nodding toward Stephen's back.

"The best I ever knew."

"He doesn't look like a chauffeur."

"No?"

"I mean, he looks like more than that."

"He is an expert machinist, too. He could build a car like this—the mechanical part of it—so he can make repairs on it. And also, a man who knows a great deal about the mechanism of his engine, gets better results with it than one who knows little beyond its brakes, and steering-gear."

"Um," said Aunt Emily, and made no further comment; but it was evident her interest in the topic was not exhausted.

Niece Amy had an amused and supercilious curiosity to know why women worked in the fields and tended railway gates. Such "feminism" as she had imbibed in a boarding-school for girls, made her mildly resentful of this "slavery."

Eleanor had no temptation to launch her favourite theme. The time, she knew, was by no means right for it; and, besides, she wanted to watch the effect on Amy of that which she meant Amy should see.

Aunt Emily didn't like the French idea of living not on the farms but in villages from which the farmers went forth to their work on the land. That is to say, she didn't like the way the French employed this idea. The idea itself rather pleased her, and she thought there might not be so many abandoned farms in New England if there were more possibilities among American farmers for communal life; but she was uncompromising in her hostility to communal chickens and geese and pigs, and to such proximity to all livestock as the French agriculturist knows in his home.

"Up in Maine," she said, "they build barns so's they can get to 'em in bad winter weather without going from under cover. But, land! Think of the pretty white farm-houses along Maine roads, of their verandahs with vines and hammocks and rocking chairs, and their grassy front yards with flower-borders and fruit trees! This way of living is too dirty and higgledy-piggledy and heathenish for words."

"It is all of that," Eleanor agreed. "And yet, before you leave France I think you will have found a great deal, even in these farm villages, that you'll wish you could take back to New England with you."

"What, for instance?"

But Eleanor shook her head.

"It is far too soon to think of telling you. I'd rather not tell you at all—just show you what there is and let you draw your own conclusions.

"You're in a great democracy, Miss Mudge—the greatest the world has ever known. Yes, I know we think ours is the greatest—but not after we have known this. If a New Englander can get over being shocked by some of the manifestations of frankness and tolerance and other qualities of democracy as the French live it, she ought to find herself in a very congenial 'upper air.' For the ideals that France seeks through broad tolerance are, many of them, the same that New England once fought for with all the rigours of Puritanism. To realise this, though, you must not compare superficials in France with superficials in Massachusetts; you must hold an open mind until you can compare essentials. The spirit of liberty and of popular government has been maturing in French blood for centuries longer, I think, than in any other the world knows to-day. France isn't Utopia yet, by any manner of means. But out of all their struggle they've brought some interpretations of life that are incomparably fine and that will, I think, make a tremendous appeal to you if you give them a fair chance."

That this missed Niece Amy by a wide margin Eleanor could no more mistake than that it had found lodgment and hospitality with Aunt Emily; although all the latter said in comment on it was her sufficiently-expressive "Um."

The air blowing in from the sea had so sharpened appetites that every one was ready for déjeuner as soon as they reached Bayeux. The noon Angelus rang, just before they entered the old town, and Eleanor called attention to the peasants standing with briefly-bowed heads in such fields as Millet had painted, remarking that this was his native country and relating one or two anecdotes of his sturdy, spiritual kinsfolk—his father who taught him to observe nature with a loving and appreciative eye and who

uncovered his head reverently before the sunset, saying, "My son, it is God"; the grandmother who gave François the name of Assisi's saint, and who roused the lad from his slumbers by the urging "Wake up, my little Francis! The birds have long been singing the glory of our good God"; and others of that patriarchal group in the old grey stone house on the rugged cliffs at Gruchy.

"We drove over, yesterday, before going into Cherbourg, to see Gruchy and Greville," Eleanor said.

"I suppose," Miss Mudge observed, "there isn't a seven-year old child in France who doesn't know more about pictures than I do. Art wasn't in my bringing-up. I'm not more than one or two removes from the kind of Puritan who thought art forbidden in the second commandment. I don't believe that; but I've got some of it in my blood. I don't think I'll 'take to' pictures of saints, and martyrs and crucifixions. But I'd like to learn how to love some other kinds. We were all for books, in my family, and we had good ones, too; but there were lots of things we didn't get. Art was one, and music was another—precious little of that but what we had in church or when a young lady played 'Nearer My God to Thee,' with 'variations,' at a party."

The church at Bayeux was her first Gothic edifice. Eleanor made no comment as they passed it. Aunt Emily gave her a sharp scrutiny.

"Don't we look at this?" she asked.

"If you wish; certainly."

"Of course I wish! I don't know how long my interest in them'll hold out—but I'll tell you when I'm tired."

Accordingly they got out.

Aunt Emily was not loquacious on her first impressions of Gothic—for which reserve Eleanor admired her. A woman who was willing to talk about Gothic architecture after twenty minutes survey of one specimen, would have been hard indeed to bear. Niece Amy was also non-committal; but with totally different effect. One could easily

be sure that Amy had no opinion to commit. She wanted "some postcards," but decided to wait until they got to "a more interesting place, that anybody in America has ever heard of." Caen did not impress her, either, as a suitable place for the purchase of postcards; but she relented, a little, when made to see the possibilities in a card picturing St. Stephen's Church, on which she might write: "William the Conquerer was buried here more than four hundred years before Columbus discovered America." One done, the effect was so pleasing that she duplicated it nine times.

It was problematical if Aunt Emily would regard with any favour the small and very ancient inn *Guillaume-le-Conquérant* at Dives-sur-Mere, where Eleanor had thought they might stop for the night. But, if she didn't, it was an easy matter to press on a mile or two to Deauville or Trouville where there were modern hotels of which some, at least, would be open even thus early in the season.

Aunt Emily, however, was enchanted with the inn and its lovely garden, and the rooms opening off a low balcony around the inner court. And Amy sent ten more postcards from "this place that William the Conquerer sailed from when he went to conquer England, A. D. 1066."

"My!" she sighed; "doesn't that seem long ago! And at home, we go miles to see something that's as old as 1776."

Stephen was unconcealedly grouchy, when Eleanor sought him out after he had put up his car. He had not calculated on isolation to this extent.

"After the first day or so they won't want me back with them," Eleanor urged, cheeringly.

"Huh!" was his response, dark with scepticism.

Laughing, she took him off with her to walk along the beach and watch the sun set between them and those shores William had sailed hence to conquer. His opinion of their patrons was, she then learned, unrelieved by a single hope;

and for her persistence in expecting well of them, he impugned her intelligence.

"Amy is an unleavened lump," Eleanor granted; "and I doubt if anything could put the grace of living into her. I think I see why auntie brought her along—partly for company, but largely because she felt that the time had gone by when she herself might hope to capture much of the romance she has missed out of life, and so she thought she'd set Amy in hot pursuit of it. But the hunger is not in Amy. And auntie is going to make up for lost time—unless I'm very much mistaken."

On their return, Eleanor and Stephen met Miss Mudge and Amy, adventuring unguided but with the air of persons who expected grief.

Stephen took himself off. And with all her brave philosophy, Eleanor had an undeniable hurt in her heart to see him go—as if the fact that he drove a car made him ineligible for a moment's loitering in the presence of his employers.

Miss Mudge read with surprising accuracy the expression on Eleanor's face as she acknowledged Stephen's withdrawal.

"Did you know him before—this trip?" she asked.

"Yes."

Eleanor's determination not to explain Stephen—not in the smallest degree—had a kind of fierce pride at bottom of it. If these women could not recognise in him the man of worth and power, they deserved to forego all benefits of association with him. They should have from her no clew to his values; if a chauffeur's livery could hide all those values, let them remain hidden from eyes so dull.

Aunt Emily would have liked to pursue the discussion of Stephen, but Eleanor's manner seemed to forbid. This was, however, of itself sufficient to tell Aunt Emily much that she wanted to know.

Stephen dined alone. He tried to tell himself that this was just what he had expected; but he was not appreciably

comforted by that assurance. They would want Eleanor at their elbows every minute, of course! Without her, they could neither see nor understand, and might as well be back in Massachusetts. Doubtless he ought to reflect that he was earning a living and doing it in proximity to Eleanor—even in a sort of partnership with her. But the transition from such a companionship with her as he had had, to this isolation, was too great for him to undergo with equanimity.

He was immersed in gloom when she came to find him.

"Come out under the stars, dear love," she urged. "We're both a little sick at heart, and we need to get where we can feel the universe is ours."

He was ashamed to make complaint, when he saw how distressed she was on his account.

"I'm an unmentionable boob," he growled; "you ought to be disgusted with me."

"Don't be silly!" she cried, her tone full of irritation. "It's harder than we thought it was going to be; and what's the use pretending that it isn't, and birching ourselves because we can't slide into it without noticing the jolt?"

Neither of them spoke, after that, for some minutes during which they walked briskly, and breathed deeply—as he had taught her—of the air blowing fresh from the spumey sea.

"Are they nice to you?" he asked, presently, and with a truculence in his voice that made her laugh.

"Oh, as nice as pie—*too* nice! And I like Miss Mudge—I really do! I think she's all right. Any snobbery she shows, she gets from the young one. And I don't know that she has shown any, even at that. It's an extraordinary situation, and they're bewildered persons in a strange land. We mustn't expect them to grasp things at once—at first glance. I feel better now. I believe it will come out all right. But I'm most amazin' sensitive about you, dear. I could make a jolly little joke out of it if people couldn't see me, because I was working for my living. It's

when they overlook you, that I want to fight. Kiss me and tell me to be a good girl!"

Eleanor was beginning to have some serious misgivings about this venture. It was not going to be a simple matter of driving Miss Mudge through the beautiful country, under fair skies, ignoring churches and town halls and seeking gardens where nightingales sing. Miss Mudge knew nothing about glorious loafing as a joy in itself and a way to invite one's soul. She was here on a definite errand—rather, on two definite errands that did not lend themselves to driving with one pair of reins; she wanted to capture for her latter years some of that glamour in which her early life had been lacking, and she hoped to see Amy miraculously endowed with appreciations and enthusiasms she knew herself no longer capable of. These things might have been jointly possible if there had been any unity between the two women. But there was not. Even such things as either of them guessed about the other, were part of the disingenuousness between them, complicating rather than mitigating it.

If she had been alone in the undertaking with them, Eleanor might have rather enjoyed the effort to set them in a franker, happier relation to each other. But there was Stephen to consider. He was, indeed, earning a living, and doing it in circumstances which permitted them to see each other much of the time, even if they could not converse. But Eleanor, who could gladly have shared with him any isolation, including that of servitude, could not bear to have him set apart to an existence in which nothing of all that he could give was acceptable save only his ability to drive a car. There were few things either of these women needed so much as mental contact with a man like Stephen. He was the best remedy Eleanor could think of for the peculiar warp of both natures.

Little as they had said of themselves, it was easy for her to piece out the whole story—like a paleontologist con-

structing from a few bones the size and even the character and habits of a dinosaur.

Aunt Emily was the only unmarried member of her immediate family, and for fifteen years had been practically chained to the bedside of her mother, blind and paralytic, in a small, sedate New England town. Amy was the child of a sister who had married ill, and died after a leisurely repentance; the product of a poor start, boarding schools, and vacations in the home of Grandma Mudge. There was money. Where it came from did not matter, but it was evident that Aunt Emily had not till recently controlled it. With the aid of money, it was her pathetic hope to rebuild them both after their long attrition. Eleanor's heart ached for them—but not so much as it yearned over Stephen. That he be in the way of feeling himself not merely economically adequate to subsistence in this strange country, this new phase of life, but a successful prospector in its treasure-fields—this was her demand for him. She had urged him into this enterprise. She felt responsible that it yield him something more than bread.

CHAPTER XXXI

AFTER a fortnight with them in and around Paris, Stephen and Eleanor felt that they could plan with some hope of success a southern tour for Miss Mudge and Amy. In the variety of experience they crowded into fourteen days and evenings, they learned quite definitely what did and what did not appeal to the patrons of the enterprise. And, also, the patrons underwent no slight expansion of interests, one of the greatest being in the direction of appraising Stephen.

So, on a morning glinting with gold and warm with the fragrant breath of spring, they passed out of the fort of Paris, at the Porte d'Orleans, and sped on their way to the south.

They were all in high spirits, and the car hummed along as happily as if it loved the adventure, too.

Eleanor was inside the car with Amy; and Aunt Emily sat beside Stephen—asking questions and leading him into discussion of many things. The presence, everywhere, of soldiers greatly impressed her, who had seldom seen a uniform save on Decoration Day and the Fourth of July. The idea of conscription was a colossal folly to her, a sort of superstitious survival of an age outgrown. Stephen was not sure what he thought about it; he was making up his mind, but doing it slowly. It was one of his prime interests in this trip. But his gropings were full of thought-provoking quality, and Emily Mudge delighted in them.

Watching them through the glass, Eleanor glowed with hopefulness for the triumph of her beloved in this crucial adventure of his life. They had talked little, in their scant intercourse of late, about what lay behind him; the small concerns of their present business pressed upon them for

attention and absorbed nigh all the time for talk they had. And, too, Eleanor was afraid to find out if his feeling about the enterprise was like her own. To her, it seemed that the developments of the next four months would determine what direction the rest of Stephen's life would take; and when she thought what those developments might be, she could only hope he would not let them determine too much.

When this summer was over, he would have been a year away from Mexico and Montezuma and all his interests there. The probabilities of more touring would be slight, but not as slight—she felt—as the probability of his desiring more. His mind would be so saturated with new impressions that it would crave surcease, for a time anyway. It was not in nature that he should settle down to a winter of driving somebody's car about Paris, earning a bare living as a servant and foregoing all else, just to be near her. At least, she did not believe it was in his nature—and she hoped it was not. She loved him far too splendidly to see him do that, or to feel aught but heart-break if he inclined to do it. He must feel himself growing, attaining, overcoming, triumphing. On no other foundation could that love live which she demanded of him and for him.

If this summer proved a mere test of his ability to earn a living, or a mere opportunity to see new sights, or even a mere shift for being with her, the natural—and desirable—outcome of it would be that by fall he would either go back to the old, probably unchanged, conditions in America; or, he would refuse to go back, and then suffer for that choice. She doubted if he would ever live away from her. And yet, she feared more than she feared death having him stay near her on any conditions other than such as would enable him to feel a victor in life.

Her misgivings on his account, at the outset of this enterprise with Miss Mudge, had been not such as one has over the prospect of having trying company on a

season tour, nor dislike of earning bread in circumstances far from congenial. She knew that the first months of Stephen's flight from bondage had served their excellent purpose, in crowding his days and nights so full of physical toil and hardship and the struggle to live, that there was no room in them for reflection on that past which he was then able to think of only with resentment and bitterness. The months in Paris had been months of delicious calm and rich mental and emotional expansion. Now was come the period of real test, in which Stephen would feel himself either a man expatriate for love, and for love's sake penniless and in servitude; or, a man led by love into a larger inheritance than any he had ever before dreamed of. His sense of kinship with the beauty and romance of the world was now well established. There remained for him to know the supreme adventure of expressing that kinship, in fine and glowing action.

No wonder that Eleanor had suffered many qualms on the eve of making this test in company with Aunt Emily and Amy! And yet, as they sped out of Paris that mid-April morning, she was cheered by a high hopefulness which did not diminish because she was unable to define it.

Orleans was their first objective.

Near Toury, a stone by the side of the road, marks the spot whence Bleriot made the first aerial journey (a flight of ten miles) five and a half years before.

"Think of it!" Stephen said. "And now they fly scores of miles—or hundreds!—and we take it all quite calmly, as if men had been flying since time began. Every government is fondling and rewarding these sublime youngsters whom they barely refrained, six or seven years ago, from locking up as loons!"

"Yes, and lots of them—of those 'sublime youngsters' as you call them—get killed at this flying business," Aunt Emily remarked cynically.

Stephen laughed—not with mirth, but with impatience of her view.

"We all get killed," he answered. "Some of us are killed by over-eating, and lots of us are killed by over-drinking. If 'man's chief end' is to live as long as he can, most of us are serving it badly. If it is to do something while we're here—not for ourselves alone, but for those to come after us—I can't see that the boys who tumble out of the clouds are so much worse off than old men who die of gout."

"Um," said Aunt Emily.

They had brought a delicious luncheon, and they ate it in the forest of Orleans. Stephen could not, without making parade of his attitude, go apart to eat his share; so he joined the women. The conversation was principally between him and Aunt Emily, and about What Man Lives For, or, Why Some Men Risk Death by Falling Out of the Sky.

"Why do women bear children?" he asked—in his earnestness half-forgetting that he was talking to two women unaccustomed to such lack of locution. "Because there is in them something stronger than the fear of pain, of death—something that has to be stronger, so the world may go on. Men have this stronger something in them, too, and it makes us—some of us!—forget self-preservation—at times!"

"I have often thought," Eleanor observed, "what a study it would be: the lives that went out in what seemed—at the time—futile sacrifice. I'm sure there were kindly persons in Judea who deplored the death of the gentle young Nazarene—who told one another what a pity it was that he talked treason against Herod and against Rome and had to pay the penalty for calling himself the Messiah, when he might have lived on to a ripe age doing good to his fellow men. And so on, all the way down through history—not least of all the little Maid of Orleans who died in the flames when she was nineteen—condemned as a sorceress by the Church she adored, abandoned by France, sold to the apparently-victorious enemy. Yet she

saved France then—she has saved it since—she will save it again; her memory is more precious, and more potent, even than that of the Little Corporal; no other nation has a spiritual leadership comparable with what France has in her."

Orleans has more memorials of her than any other place. Orleans gave her, to wear always, its name. But one captures her there less readily than at many another place. The walls she stormed are gone. And it is not easy to see her even in the ancient rue du Tabour, where she alighted on her arrival, and where the Jeanne d'Arc museum is picturesquely housed in a mansion of her period. But Eleanor sought, and found, in a bookseller's, a copy of that work in which Boutet de Monvel elucidates for children his most exquisite pictures of the Maid of France, with a text of incomparable simplicity and beauty.

Translating, she read it for them—the whole great story as the painter tells it in three or four thousand words—and with the aid of his wonderful pictures, Orleans opened her treasures of memory and made these pilgrims from overseas sharers in the glorious heritage of France.

"Open this book with reverence, my dear children," the brief preface concludes, "in honor of the humble peasant girl who is the patroness of France, who is the Saint of her country as she was its martyr. Her history will teach you that in order to conquer, you must believe that you will conquer. Remember this in the day when your country shall have need of all your courage."

What prevision he may have had, just eighteen years ago, when he wrote those words, we shall never know. But, since he was among the Heavenly Host when the spirit of Jeanne d'Arc led that world-saving stand at Lagny-on-the-Marne, one trusts that it was his glory to realise what part in that stand his story of The Maid and his injunction may have played: "Remember this in the day when your country shall have need of all your courage." They were there, at Lagny—those children of France upon

whose hearts he wrote ten and twelve and fifteen and eighteen years before. It was their immortal courage that saved Liberty to unborn generations.

Aunt Emily, studying De Monvel's pictures of the walls and bastions, said she could imagine the siege of a city so-defended; but what she could not imagine was the taking and re-taking of a town like the modern Orleans three times within two months in the Franco-Prussian War.

"I just simply can't stretch my mind to take that in," she went on, wonderingly. "A quiet, little old sleepy place like this, going along about its business, and suddenly—! What do they do? Move up an army and begin to shoot at anybody and everybody?"

Stephen, whom she seemed to address, shook his head.

"Don't ask me! I can't grasp it, either. I can comprehend, after a fashion, Cæsar taking it, or Attila trying to. But when I try to think of war on a country like this, in times like these, I can't do it, any more than you can. It's inconceivable! I'm trying to puzzle out why this place should be, as friend Baedeker says, 'the key to Central and Southern France,' and I can't see. But, since it is the headquarters of an army corps, it is doubtless well-defended, by forts we're not aware of. A besieging army would have to reckon with their well-placed, long-range guns, I suppose, before it could get close enough to 'shoot at anybody and everybody.' And, without knowing a thing in the world about it, I've a notion that it is hard for an advancing army to carry guns of as great range and power as those that are in forts."

"Seems such a lot of foolishness!" Aunt Emily declared. "Like battleships! I'll bet there isn't anything a lot of busy, civilised people have got time to stop and fight about, nowadays."

"I don't know," Stephen answered. "It's hard to tell. National consciousness is a strange thing; you never know how much of it's there until some spark falls in the maga-

zine. And there's class-consciousness—democracy's last fight is not yet won, I daresay. I know people who think there's enough religious bigotry left in the world to support another war. Maybe there is. Maybe I've got some of it in me! I don't suspect it, now. But there are principles I'd die for, fast enough."

"For instance?"

"I don't think I could define them—like this—in cool blood. I only know that I have that in me which could be aroused to the defence of certain things—things I believe I am in honour bound to cherish, and to transmit to generations after me. I can't say that 'this is one of them,' and 'that is not one.' I'm a 'tur'ble' peaceable person; I can give up everything I have, without a show of fight—I know that about myself, because I've tested it. But I have fighting blood in me; I'll fight for the inestimable things; and I reckon that most men will do the same."

"I'll bet you he's some kind of a prince in disguise—or something like that," Amy insisted to Aunt Emily, that night when they were making ready for bed.

"He's a good American!" Miss Mudge objected, with vigorous defence.

"Well, you know what I mean—and you know, yourself, he's no chauffeur."

"He's a mighty good one—I know that!"

"But he's a lot more!"

"Of course."

"I wonder who he is, and why he's here! Isn't it exciting? I'll bet you there's some kind of a romance about him—and Miss Atwell. I bet you he's driving a car so he can be near her——"

"Fiddlesticks!"

"Well, why, then?"

"Ask him—why don't you?"

"Don't be snippy! You know I can't."

"And do you think I can?"

"I thought he might have dropped a hint—he seems to talk to you so much. Or maybe she did."

"Umph! You could put in your eye all they ever 'drop'—either of them."

"You must think something about them, though; and you might tell me."

But that sort of character-analysis and discussion which the mature owe to the immature, was not in Emily Mudge's list of obligations to her niece. That there might be infinite profit for her as well as for Amy in comparing what they saw from their different points of view, what they felt with their different perceptions, she could not comprehend. She had no suspicion of anything that she called "wrong" in the relation—whatever it might be—between Stephen and Eleanor; her intuition was good enough to satisfy her on that point. But she felt that there might be something in it which Amy 'could not understand' or would 'misinterpret'; and the prudent-auntie thing to do, in her mind, was to act as if she considered the whole situation to have no values beyond those the surface showed.

Amy was dull—"about one hundred and thirty pounds of girl," Stephen described her—but she was not by any means so dull as her Aunt Emily believed her to be; and there was enough human nature in her to make Miss Mudge's evasiveness serve the usual end; morbid instead of healthy curiosity.

Quentin Durward made Plessis-les-Tours and Loches interesting to Aunt Emily, and failed to do the same for Amy—because Amy had not read it.

"Scott is so hard to get interested in!" Amy complained in defence of her non-acquaintance.

"And nowadays," retorted Aunt Emily, "no young person ever perseveres in anything that's 'hard'! What a stale world it'll be to live in, pretty soon, when nobody has read Dickens and Scott, and nobody knows Clive Newcomb from Major Pendennis! If any one could see what

the schools and colleges give young folks in exchange for all they learn to sniff at!"

This, that Eleanor could define only as a sort of perpetual hostility between generations, was—now that she had ceased to fear its possible ill-effect on Stephen and on their enterprise—a rather fascinating study in temperaments. Each of these women was almost constantly impugning the other's sources of satisfaction, her current of thought; and not only hers, but that of her day and generation.

"A certain amount of tug and check is inevitable," she observed to Stephen. "But *this* amount seems exceptional to me. Maybe it isn't, though. I wonder?"

Stephen smiled at her—they were driving to Loches, and she had made some pretext to get the seat beside him—a world of comradely content in the expression of his grey eyes. She delighted in his point of view on such things; in the kind of essential soundness he brought to every question, and which she found wonderfully steadying.

"I reckon it's about averag't," he said, his tone and manner easy-going, indulgent, as he knew how to make them for her benefit. "Lots of people—most people!—have the same notion: that there's some magic in consanguinity that makes persons who are related, congenial and helpful to one another. There isn't, of course! Some folks find out that there isn't—and some go on hoping—'a triumph of hope over experience.' Others use their intelligence. But I think they have to come to this in their own way. I've never seen any one exhorted or led into doing it. Anyway, you didn't hire out as an aunt-and-niece trainer! You hired out as a courier-guide, and you're a wonder at it."

He had learned how, when she seemed in danger of driving herself too hard, feeling too much responsibility, to put just the right curb on her intensity, and slow her down to a more comfortable gait. She recognised the method and the intent, and loved both tenderly. Her daily-developing realisation of her profound need of him,

was the most precious thing in her life, these exquisite spring days as they went journeying through the wonder-world of France in their partnership-supreme.

Pilgrimage in the lands of Romance has been beloved by ardent hearts for many centuries. Records of such pilgrimages have been the favoured theme of poets and storytellers since wandering minstrels were eagerly welcomed in early-mediæval castle halls. Their songs of fair places visited, of great personages recalled, of love and valour in other days, became sublimated in Dante and Petrarch and in Chaucer. No generation since has been so engrossed with other business as to fail in encouragement of that minstrelsy which hands on and on the harp that sings of fairer climes and braver days.

This, that Stephen and Eleanor were doing, was the Great Adventure, sung in many centuries. But it was more—much more—to them; they thought they knew how much more—but that remained to be revealed. They felt that since errantry and minstrelsy began, no wandering had ever been so rich, in so many values, as this of theirs—though the full power of its effect on them was beyond their ability to prevision.

What they did know was that they were earning their bread in conditions that “netted,” as Stephen said, a higher percentage of pure ecstasy than most persons have got who covered the same ground as the long-desired reward for a lifetime of prosaic toil. Also, they were making an adventure in partnership which in itself was of the essence of that relation between man and woman that gives the deepest significance to life. And they were laying up great treasure of those common memories wherewith the richest companionships are fed and kept growing.

Starved for thrills as she was, Aunt Emily descended even to the deepest dungeons at Loches.

“If there’s worse than this,” she declared, when she had seen where Louis kept his counsellors in iron cages

too low to stand in, too short to lie in, "I want to see it."

Neither Eleanor nor Amy shared this determination; but Stephen went not unwillingly with Miss Mudge and the custodian who hoped the *Americaine* would realise how little he relished that dark descent—and reward him accordingly.

"I don't see how any one lived long enough down there to need any bread and water," Aunt Emily said, when she emerged. "I nearly died of it in two minutes."

She was interested in Loches—deeply interested, as she had not been in châteaux. It fascinated her—everything about it, from the torture chamber to the empty tomb of Agnes Sorel, with angels at her effigy's head and woolly lambs at its feet. She was loath to leave after a single visit; so they went back, after luncheon, and wandered about the castle enclosure until late afternoon, spending the night at the little hotel hard-by one of the picturesque old gates in the demolished town wall, instead of at Bourges as they had expected to do.

The little town was haunted by ghosts more numerous and more thrilling than had appeared to Emily Mudge anywhere else in the Old World. The Lion-Heart, back from the Holy Land, brought his crusading host again about the walls, for her, and re-took from the French Crown this ancient stronghold of the Plantagenets. (Hundreds of years, it had been theirs, even in Richard's day.) King Jamie the Fifth of Scotland, man of many amours, came riding hither in state to wed the daughter of the Guises, and make her the mother of the hapless Mary, Queen of Scots. The great Emperor Charles brought his retinue here to accept the hospitality of Francis First, and to impress him; and was received with magnificence calculated to balance the humiliation of Pavia and Madrid. But most of all, Louis was here: standing apart from the fawning court of his father, balefully eyeing fair Agnes, and plotting that treason and parricide which, miscarrying, sent him into exile in Burgundy, and thrust D'Alençon into a

dungeon here; later, when the power was his, making those noisome depths part of his policy of subjection by terror.

Loches shows the evolution from stronghold to château—the evolution which Louis with his ruthless despotism chiefly brought about. The graves of feudalism are all over France; every battle-scarred donjon antedating the sixteenth century is a monument to the system which France replaced with nationalism almost four centuries before harassed Italy or mediæval Germany became a nation. But of them all, none is more suggestive than Loches; there one feels the purpose of that despot who sunk his fangs to but one end: the centralisation of power in France and the creation, from hundreds of preying feudatories, of a great people united for defence and for development.

Stephen was intensely interested in this idea as Loches presented it to him. And Emily Mudge grappled with it valiantly, and to good purpose. Eleanor had much occasion to bless Philippe des Commynes for the hours upon hours she had spent in his fascinating company.

"The English were ages ahead, though; weren't they?" Miss Mudge said, her English ancestry making her tone ring with pride in progenitors who had so long preceded all others in the great idea characterising modern history.

Eleanor smiled, indulgently, yet with a twitch of teasing.

"William the Norman tended to that pretty thoroughly," she replied. "But the big thing in England was the check put on kingly despotism, not in the interest of feudal powers, but as a beginning of representative government. I was taken to the British Museum to gaze reverently on the Magna Charter when I was a very little girl. And I was made, somehow, to understand at least a little of all it has meant in the long struggle for right government. In her Civil War, England was again ahead of France—much more than a hundred years ahead—but she's behind France, now, in democracy. Still, they both stand for a

different era of civilisation from the Teutonic—and so does Italy. Wait and see what you shall see!”

Stephen was sure this was unfair to the enterprising neighbours across the Rhine. But he didn't argue about it, because he had no personal impressions of Germanic government and ideals.

Amy, meanwhile, maintained her interest in postcards and began to write her name “Aimée.”

But that in Emily Mudge's inheritance which had come to her from ancestors whose passion for their rights in worship and in government had transcended all other passions in them, stirred wakeningly.

CHAPTER XXXII

AMY was due at school about the middle of September, and their return passage was not engaged. Eleanor suggested that as late-August and early-September sailings were always crowded, it would be well to write to Paris and learn what was available around August tenth to fifteenth. But Emily Mudge, like a child at a party, fought shy of even the thought of going home. Her winged van had so spoiled her for the white Colonial house on Federal Street and the somnolent decorum of her home town, that she told Eleanor she believed she'd send Amy back "and stay over here till I get tired—if I ever do!"

Eleanor was thinking pretty hard for herself, as June sped by under the blue skies of north Italy and Tirol. Stephen never talked of the future, and she was unwilling to coax from him any hint of his feeling about it. She knew that when he glimpsed the way ahead he would tell her about it and discuss with her any plan that occurred to him. This phase of his life must take its own time and course. And until she saw what came out of it or succeeded to it, she could not make any decisions for herself. There was only one thing possible for her to do, and that was: whatever would serve him most perfectly. When the vision came to him of what he must do, she would gird him for the undertaking, whatever it might be. For her, life would be well or ill only as her love helped him or failed to help him to the realisation of his highest and best.

They were at Innsbruck, on the twenty-eighth day of June, when the Austrian heir and his wife were assassinated. A mild calamity, it seemed—resented rather for its breach of hospitality than for the loss to the Empire. The succession to the Imperial Crown did indeed change often,

and usually through one of the tragedies that the accursed Hapsburgs were heirs to. But Franz Josef went on forever; and there was another heir-apparent ready for the job of waiting. The dead man—it might as well be admitted, though with decent respect for those taken by the all-Conqueror—was small loss to any nation. It was, however, irritating that those Serbs thought they could do such a thing. Impudent beggars! One would think they'd have more caution, even if they had no courtesy. Ah, well! Bread was no cheaper, beer no dearer, love no lighter, whether the man who waited for Unser Franz Josef's well-worn shoes were named Carl or Ferdinand.

Munich, where they spent the next week, seemed to feel much more incensed over the Archduke's death than Tirol, apparently, had been. Munich had, one gathered, quite a thirst for Serbian blood. No! it was not, of course, Bavaria's loss. But in another manner of speaking, it *was*. Consideration for the aged Austrian ruler, for his long tenure of the throne, for the affection in which his people held him (by appeal of his sorrows, perhaps, as much as of his deserts) caused Germans to speak little of the fact: but of course the German Empire is not properly divisible between two emperors. Read history, and see if greatness ever came to a divided empire. The king of Hungary, the kings of small Austrian nations innumerable, were fiefs of the German Imperial Crown. By tolerance and courtesy and respect for sad old age, Berlin did not press this upon Vienna. But the fact remained. Archduke Ferdinand might not have known that Berlin considered him under its protection. But Berlin knew it! The Serbs might not have known that they were inviting the retributive wrath of Prussia. But Prussia knew it! And Bavaria had the virus of the pan-Germanic Empire in her blood, too.

Emily Mudge had scarcely been able to look up at the blue skies of Italy—so fearful was she of stepping into

dirt. She liked Venice, measurably—staying over on the Lido had facilitated this—but she hailed Austria with joy.

"I haven't had such good coffee since I left the States," she said. "And real cream! And such cakes! I don't believe I could ever stand it in Italy for any length of time. I'd like to hose out the whole place, and whitewash it, and bathe all the inhabitants. These people look so clean and wholesome and intelligent."

Eleanor had had excellent example and encouragement from her youth up, in the gentle grace of patience while people make up their minds; and association with Stephen had added no little to that habit of tolerance which distinguished her from many another idealist. She had been in Germany several times—never for very long, but always for as long as she cared to stay. There were scores of places in it, and hundreds of things, she was truly anxious to see. But she had never been able to enjoy any happiness in seeing them. Somehow, an instance out of her little-girlhood was ever-present in her mind when she was in Germany: There had been among her occasional playmates a child whose mother was the principal of a celebrated school for young women, until she married a man of wealth and distinction. The sole flower of this late union had a difficult time a-blooming. Her mother felt that the child gave her opportunity to exemplify all those theories of education which she had not been able quite to do justice to in her school, because she did not get her "material" young and plastic enough. And the child's father was quite weighed down with his sense of her almost-awful responsibility in being the only one of "the rising generation" to bear her illustrious name and wear the honours of her paternal ancestry. The child had a long playroom, stocked with things which might have been very delightful—but were not. She loved having Eleanor for playmate because Eleanor was so vivid and so resourceful in all kinds of "let's pretend." But the child's mother frowned upon her fondness for going to Eleanor's

house rather than for having Eleanor come to her; she wanted to cultivate hospitality in the child—she would have a great deal of it to dispense, some day, and it was in tenderest youth that training for such things should commence. Eleanor, however, didn't like to play at Anne's house—because Anne's mother was always present, either in person or in spirit. And, no matter how exciting was the drama of her fashioning, it was almost sure to be interrupted at the most thrilling moment and ruthlessly ordered to suspend, because Anne's practice hour had struck, or the hour of each day when all her talk must be in German or in French—and Anne was too elemental in both those tongues to carry on any play in them. If you forgot to leave your rubbers in a certain designated place—out of sight behind the porcelain umbrella holder, in the vestibule—you were sent back so ignominiously to put them there that when you returned to play you couldn't make yourself feel like the Queen of Sheba. You were supposed to keep at least one eye on the playroom clock, and to begin, not less than fifteen minutes before Anne's practice hour, to put carefully away every single thing you had removed from its appointed place. Once, Eleanor took her four-weeks-old kitten to Anne's (by stealth) and, having instructed the mite that it was "an old hungry lion," started it up the narrow stairway of Anne's doll-house, on a frightful search for prey. Midway, kitty stuck—her hapless victims sleeping on in their beds in the second story. Efforts to drag the old hungry lion down by the tail, were no more rewarded than efforts to drag it up by the nose or ears. The hour for practice struck; Anne's mother looked in at the door to see if everything was put neatly in place; the way she looked at the guest who had contributed to the delinquency she saw, made both guest and hostess feel how inadvisable it would be to mention the kitten. So Anne went to the piano, and Eleanor slunk home in an agony of apprehension—which she disclosed at once to her grandfather; and that eminent scholar

went straightway to fetch pussy out of duress. In Germany, Eleanor always felt as if she were back in Anne's house.

She had not mentioned Anne to Stephen, nor to Miss Mudge. This was not any mere large-mindedness; it was the same love of suspense, of waiting to see what would happen, which had characterised her childish play and her youthful delight in tales of romance and adventure. Awaiting the disclosure of Germany's effect on Stephen and on Aunt Emily, was akin to the pleasures of a serial story and the month's uncertainty as to which way a thing would turn. When she was quite young, she liked waiting to know whether the hero, after falling over the edge of a precipice, was dashed to atoms or landed safely in an eagle's downy nest. Later, it was thrilling to guess for thirty days, whether the wicked Lord Somebody-or-Other would succeed in wedding his unwilling bride before the Hero dashed up to the portcullis, bearing the warrant of the King. Nowadays, it was absorbing to possess one's soul in patience until some sign came, disclosing whether either of these two who had been so impressed by Loches, realised that the feudalism they were now observing was close-akin to that which lingered on in France for a while after Louis XI broke the power of the nobles and, with the aid of Loches and all it symbolised, began building up a national banking system, establishing the world's first post service, and otherwise developing a paternalism which, with all its rigours and terrors and blood-letting, was very good for France—four hundred years ago—or would have been, had not his blundering foreign policy heavily counterbalanced it.

Neither Stephen nor Aunt Emily was unaware of Eleanor's attitude; and, of course, they would have been less or more than human had not each of them entertained a hope of impressions which they might successfully oppose to hers. But they were candid souls, both; and that hope was unavailing.

From Munich they went to Nuremberg, and thence to Rothenburg, and on to Frankfort; then loitered along the left bank of the Rhine; and at Cologne debated whether to keep on up to Amsterdam, or to head for Paris by way of Aachen and Liège.

Amy decided—Amy, who was booked to sail on August twelfth and wanted to get some clothes made before her return.

"Can't you," she entreated, "go up there after I'm gone? I don't really care about it, and I do want some Paris stuff to take back. People think you're crazy if you come back without any."

She was so plaintive that all three of the others felt twinges of compunction as they realised what an unregarded "trailer" poor Amy had become.

Stephen had, indeed, valiantly offered himself—when she had over-sufficiently encouraged him to do so—as her escort to such mild places of evening amusement as the towns on their route afforded. But Aunt Emily quite suddenly found herself of a new mind about cafés: instead of forbidding them to Amy, she espoused them for herself; developing a mania for this point of observation of the human comedy. So that Amy, who would have enjoyed evenings with Stephen alone, asking him artless-seeming questions without number, and getting him to speculate for her on the probable relationships of persons in the groups about them, found it dull being "the dummy" at endless table-talk on topics uninteresting to her.

Accordingly, in the behalf of Amy's frocks and gloves and lingerie and presents to girl friends, they left Cologne after an early breakfast, lunched at Liège, and followed the Meuse through Namur to Dinant—which seemed as good a place to stop the night as any they could hope to reach.

"A lot of the possible routes to Paris," Stephen said, studying the road map, "have long stretches of stone paving. I can figure out about forty-seven ways of getting

there; but the best highway goes to Rheims and then down to Epernay and right along the Marne to Paris."

Accordingly, they went that way, and slept the next night at Rheims where Emily Mudge evinced a keen interest not in Gothic splendour incomparable, but in the coronation-place of more than thirty French kings, and especially in the memories of Jeanne d'Arc which are there enshrined.

"You'll laugh and be gratified—and I can't tell you how I hate to see you do it!—but I've a sense of home-coming that's so strong it's almost uncanny," she admitted to Eleanor, as they left Rheims. "I couldn't define it, to save my life—but these people whose ways are so strange to me and whose language I can't understand, seem like own-folks. Maybe I had a French Grandma, once; or, dear knows, maybe I *lived* here! I didn't feel it at first; I was so taken-up with the difference from New England. But after we crossed the border, this time, I began to have the kind of feeling I'm not at all sure I'd have, now, if I found myself rolling along Federal Street!"

"Different," Eleanor questioned, demurely, "from what you had in—Germany?"

"You stop that, Miss!" cried Emily Mudge. "I'm not so stupid as I look: I know your little game! But I must say, you play it well. And, of course, you know how I'd love to beat you at it. I can't, though!"

"I thought," Eleanor went on, disobeying—like a child—chiefly to see what would happen, "you were so favourably impressed with the cleanliness and good government in Germany?"

"Humph! Cleanest, most obedient, saddest place I was ever in, was an orphan asylum. For a long time after I saw it, I could hardly find a youngster dirty and naughty enough to suit me. These people are free people, and they know it. Their knowledge isn't expressed in any one thing they do—it's in everything. This is their country—it belongs to them. Over there," jerking her head toward

the Rhine, "they belong to It. Dassent have a dirty face or a pig in the parlor, no matter how much they prefer things that way! Orphans! Scared of their lives! I 'got' it—don't know how I did, but I 'got' it: they exist for the State. Here, all France is and all she has been, seems to belong to each and every one. They all act like the heirs of liberty and civilisation. That's as near as I can come to expressing it."

"I should say it was near enough," Eleanor observed.

In a hotel at Eprenay, where they stopped for a few moments, the proprietor's wife drew Eleanor aside.

"Mademoiselle, I think, is an American?" she said, in French and speaking low.

"There is, Mademoiselle, a guest here who comes from America. She is very sad, and I cannot comfort her. I thought that Mademoiselle, perhaps——"

"Is she alone?"

"Since a week ago, yes. Her husband was here with her. He is of Metz. One week ago, he went back there—it was necessary. Madame was quite unwell—she could not accompany him. Monsieur said he would return the next day, if possible. He has not come. They had been here quite a time. Monsieur was a buyer of champagnes——"

Eleanor caught the peculiar inflection of Madame's voice as she made the last statement. What it indicated was the sort of thing one does not ask questions about.

"Do you think Madame would like to see me?"

"I could ask, Mademoiselle."

She disappeared; and very shortly afterwards returned to beg the American lady's attendance upon the forlorn guest.

In the bed—ill, more from tears and anxiety than from her delicate condition—Eleanor found a pathetic slip of a Southern girl of twenty-three, perhaps; a white-faced,

dark-haired, dark-eyed little thing who looked terrified of life rather than of death.

"Oh!" she cried, hysterically, "it was good of you to come. I'm 'most crazy. I can only speak a very little French. I can ask for things—a few—that I need—but I can't say enough to ask advice—even if they could give it. My husband speaks French perfectly. But he has gone away. I don't know what to do."

She began to cry. Eleanor had never seen a grown woman cry in this way before—not sadly, as one bereaved, nor bitterly, as one disappointed, but with that agony of fear which children's crying sometimes has, when the little creatures seem to feel themselves defenceless against the might of a grown world.

Eleanor sat down on the edge of the bed and laid her hand soothingly on the convulsive shoulders.

"Do you fear—he has"—it was hard to say—"left you?"

"Not," the girl sobbed, "as you mean; not of his will. But—oh! if you should tell this—if *they* should find out I told—they would shoot him. Even if I could tell these kind people, here, I wouldn't dare. It would be their duty to reveal it—and he would be shot, I know. You wouldn't feel it was your duty? You wouldn't want to get him shot?"

It was bewildering. All Eleanor could make of it was that the husband of this frightened young creature must have committed some crime.

"I wouldn't want," she said quite truthfully, "to get any man shot."

"He's good," the girl went on, "and kind; it's a different way from our way—especially in the South—but I didn't believe it, when they told me I wouldn't be happy. He was a wonderful lover! Such verses and beautiful pet names and adoration! I ran away with him. We were married all right, though. He was so nice, and respectful, and didn't want to take any advantage, or anything like that. I couldn't help believing in him. I do

now! But I see what they meant, at home—too! I almost died when we were with his people. And he was different, there. It was hard to like him. He acted like he cared more for showing them how well he could train me, than he cared for making me happy when I was so homesick and strange. When we came here, it was better. I was awful lonesome, but I got on pretty well. It's a terrible thing, though, for a girl raised like I was, to be 'way off here with not a soul to speak to, and her baby coming; and now—*this!*"

Still no hint of what "this" might be.

"You're sure you won't tell?"

Eleanor disliked making that kind of a promise.

"I can't say," she answered, "until I know what it is I mustn't tell. But I think you can trust me. If it's anything my conscience won't let me keep quiet about, I won't go off promising silence—I'll give you warning, here and now."

But the girl shook her head.

"I can't," she said, regretfully. "I'm afraid."

"I'm sorry."

Eleanor rose to go. But the look in those terror-filled dark eyes as they burned in that blanched face, drew her down again. If she refused confession to this tormented soul, remorse for the refusal would haunt her to the brink of the grave. Surely it was her solemn duty to grant a confessor's silence though she could not grant a confessor's pardon.

"I promise," she whispered.

The girl, looking at her, knew she was safe.

"My husband cannot come back," she said, simply; "he is mobilised."

"He is what?"

"Mobilised—with his regiment—gone to the war."

"What war?"

"With France and Russia."

"What for?"

She thought the girl was delirious. Not that there had not been war-talk a-plenty, but that it all seemed so incredible to her. And then, there was always war-talk in Europe!

"Don't you know? On account of Serbia."

"But why France and Russia?"

"Why, because Russia won't make Serbia do penance, and France is Russia's friend."

"And is Germany going to fight them both?"

"Germany and Austria together. Albert says it won't last long. Russia isn't organised—isn't ready; and France is all divided—so many parties and so much quarrelling among them, they'll never get together on anything. The war will be over in a month, he says. The Germans will be in Paris about the eighteenth of August; they have it all planned; it is terrible!"

There could be no doubt that she believed it. And she was not out of her mind. She had listened to a lot of German bombast and had not known how to discount it.

"Nonsense, child!" Eleanor said, rather sharply.

"Ah, no; it isn't nonsense," the girl cried. "I knew you'd think so! But it isn't. These people, here, would say the same, I believe. And yet—Are you sure you won't tell?"

"Sure! If I did, I'd be locked up in a mad-house."

"I believe you would be! But I know! They're coming here—on the way. Albert is 'most crazy. He sent me word to go to Metz at once—to his people. He knows I don't like it there. But he ordered me to go—he didn't ask me—they don't, you know! they *tell* you. I don't know what to do—I'm so frightened I can't think—I just lie here and shiver."

Eleanor got up and walked to the window and stood looking out into the *Place* where the car was standing, with Stephen at the wheel—wondering, doubtless, at the delay.

It was Wednesday, the twenty-second of July.

Returning, presently, to her place at the bedside, she said:

"If you don't go to his people, won't he be terribly anxious and—angry?"

"Of course."

That seemed enough. She could think of an alternative, in spite of her certainty as to how he would feel against it. To Eleanor, that was ample indication how she regarded the man who was her husband.

"What do you want to do?"

"I don't know. Only, I can't bear to go there. I hated it when he was there. I couldn't bear it, all alone."

"It is his baby, you know, as well as yours."

"Yes; but it's mine as well as his, too—and more!"

"When do you expect it?"

"In about a month."

"Suppose you went somewhere else, or stayed here, and he never forgave you?"

"And never came back to me?"

"Yes."

"Well—if it came to that or going to Metz, I believe I——"

"What?"

"I believe I'd go somewhere else—if I knew where to go. And if he didn't want to forgive me, why——"

That was the strength of this bond!

"Have you—pardon me! but it seems a necessary question—any money?"

"A little. They don't give you much, you know. I don't believe I've got twenty dollars."

(She still counted money in dollars and cents.)

Eleanor thought hard for a minute. Stephen "honked" suggestively. They were ninety miles from Paris, and it was nearly three o'clock.

"Wait a minute," she said. "I'll be back. I must tell my friends why I'm detaining them."

Downstairs, Emily Mudge was entertaining herself sufficiently in the hotel lobby, looking on at the gathering of a clan come to attend a wedding on the morrow: all the

uncles and the cousins and the aunts of the bridegroom. Amy was out, wandering up and down restlessly, keeping within sight of the car.

As briefly as she could, Eleanor repeated to Aunt Emily as much of their countrywoman's revelation as could not be considered a violation of her pledge.

"Will you," she said, "go up and see her, and tell me what you think we ought to do? I can't drive off and leave her, unless I'm sure it is the thing I should do."

When Miss Mudge went upstairs, Eleanor sought Stephen and told him all the details which could not conceivably lead to Albert's being shot.

Stephen's first thoughts were all of a cautious sort.

"Better not meddle in it," he urged. "German gentlemen do not impress me as the sort I would care to have on my trail for abducting their wives. You might get into a horrid mess about it. Why on earth doesn't he look after her, or have some one else do it if he can't?"

Eleanor's distress because she could not explain was evident in her expression.

"There's a reason," she replied; "but I had to promise not to tell it. It's a terrible reason, and one which makes me feel that I must get her out of here, if I can."

He shook his head.

"Women in her state have hallucinations, sometimes," he suggested. "And I tell you, I don't like getting into a mix-up with the police; we don't know the law on such things, over here, and we may lay ourselves liable to torture, or to death in the Iron Maiden, or on any other old thing, by random Samaritanism like this. You play safe, dear, and if your advice is likely to weigh with her, urge her to go to his people——"

"Even if she is unhappy with them?"

"Dearest, I tell you that may be just a notion of her state."

"You talk as if you believe she belongs to him, whether she wants to or not!"

"I'm not talking about what I think *should* be, dear! I'm trying to avoid getting into conflict with the opinions they may have of such things in Germany. I tell you, I wouldn't open a window in Germany, nor shut one, nor squint when the sun's in my eyes, without getting the sanction of the government. It isn't safe!"

She repressed a smile.

"But we're not in Germany!"

"No. But neither can we tell what the international code is. A German gentleman, even though he has left his American wife lying about rather carelessly in France, may have some treaty to invoke for her recovery. It's evident they're spoiling for a fight, over there. If this Serbian affair doesn't help them to it, you may serve them instead."

He was jesting, of course; but not wholly. Years of experience in a country where men bridled their passions very little, and fought—as the border saying is—"at the drop of the hat," had developed in him a keen perception for those manifestations which, rightly interpreted, mean truculence of attitude or intent. In the language of those frontiers he knew, it was a cinch you could tell when a fellow was spoiling for a fight. If there was any issue you had to settle without waiting for a man in that mood to cool off, you settled it with him as best you could. Otherwise, if you were easy-going and peaceable, you avoided him until his fever for fighting was temporarily abated. Had any one asked Stephen how he knew when a frontiersman was "spoiling for a fight," he would have been hard-put-to-it for a satisfactory answer; he felt it—that was all. He felt it in Germany: an arrogance of new opulence; a heavy, boorish intolerance of other thought than German thought, other methods than German methods; a constant swagger of the brutish boastfulness which mutters, "I can lick anybody!" The civic housekeeping in Munich and Frankfort and other cities, had impressed him as much akin to the domestic housekeeping of certain ter-

magants everywhere to be encountered, whose recipes and regulations make their homes exhibition places for their efficiency rather than havens from the world's storms. The paternalism of the government did not present to him any aspects commending it above the absolutism that characterised family life in the least-developed, least-democratic groups he had ever known.

He was still contending with Eleanor that she should not take any chances, when Emily Mudge came out.

"I'm going to take that girl to Paris," she announced, with the air of a person not to be deterred.

Stephen felt it his duty to remind her of the possible consequences.

"Fiddle!" she said. "They can't draw and quarter me for inviting a countrywoman of mine to take a ride in my buggy. She can go to Metz from Paris, if she wants to; but I'm not going to leave her here, in her condition, with no one to look after her. I suppose she's raving when she talks about her husband having gone to war, and the Germans coming here; but she believes it—and she's scared to death, poor thing!"

Stephen was startled—not by the latter part of this statement, which he supposed Miss Mudge to have defined properly as "raving," but by the former part, the simple, natural attitude toward a situation which had seemed to him so almost gruesomely complex.

Less than three weeks on German soil had subverted him from his lifelong habit of using his own common sense to adjudge the merits of a matter like this, and had put him in the mental state of one who unreasoningly fears the law.

Amy was far from pleased. But, notwithstanding, Irene Schram was taken to Miss Mudge's hotel in Paris and there installed as Aunt Emily's guest.

"When she has been in the company of fellow Americans for a few days, she may be able to think what she

wants to do," her protector declared. "She's too frightened to think now."

There would be no more journeying out of Paris, except to dine, until Amy was ready to go. The plan was to take her up to Cherbourg, and then go down to Brittany. By that time, surely, the little Lady Irene would have settled on some course.

CHAPTER XXXIII

ELEANOR had to give a good deal of time, beginning on the morning after their return to Paris, to going about shops with Amy—a “chore” which Aunt Emily unmincingly refused. This left the elder woman to minister as she could to her guest.

“I mustn’t stay here,” the little expectant-mother insisted. “You don’t believe me—you think I’m raving—but they’re coming—they’re marching now——”

“Nonsense!” said Emily Mudge, sharply. “A nation can’t mobilise secretly, in a day like this.”

She knew nothing about it; but that seemed self-evident.

“They call it *manœuvres*! But I tell you they are marching. You don’t know! Albert is not in the secret service exactly, but he helps them when he can, I think. He told me things, sometimes when he had drunk too much wine, that he would not have told me otherwise. Epernay is full of spies, and he knew them; but I never did. He left on the fourteenth—‘on business,’ he said—but he had to go so quickly. I don’t know if he knew it was the order to join his regiment, or not. He might have thought he could get back, for me; and he may have known he couldn’t. It was all so mysterious. But he told me, when he was packing, that there was going to be war soon, and that I must not be in France when it came. They would treat me terribly, he said, because I am married to a German—they might even shoot me for a spy, you know. He felt awful because I couldn’t go with him. Maybe I could have, if I had tried; but I was so frightened I thought my baby was coming right then. The next day he telegraphed me to go at once to Metz. But I couldn’t!”

"It's a wonder some of his people didn't go to fetch you."

"I think they were afraid they might not get back. But they don't like me, anyway—because I'm not German and haven't any money. I don't like them, either," she finished as simply as a child.

Her people, she said, lived in Memphis. Yes; she would go back to them if she could. It would be hard to swallow her pride. "But I'd love to be home again," sighed the child whose thin little romance had been piteously inadequate to the rigours of existence in a strange land.

As the days wore on, she was less rather than more inclined to obey her husband, and seek shelter with his relatives in Metz. (His parents were dead, it appeared, and there were only brothers and sisters, all married, with some of whom she was supposed to seek shelter.)

A sailing as late as Amy's was not advisable for her. So, accommodations being available on July 29th, she was to be sent off on that date, and Amy, protesting, with her.

Eleanor was to go up to Cherbourg with them, on the boat train—the motor ride being too long for Mrs. Schram, and the state of feeling too unsettled, anyway, to make touring pleasurable just now.

On Tuesday evening they all drove out to St. Germain for dinner on the terrace of the Pavillon Henri Quatre.

Stephen declined Miss Mudge's invitation to join the ladies at dinner, urging his desire to hear the talk in the chauffeur's quarters. Of course, no one believed in the possibility of war. But it was tremendously interesting to observe what effect even the threat of it had, while diplomacy wavered.

In payment of her *addition*, Eleanor tendered a 100 franc bank note, and received on a plate, in change, a 50 franc note, and four of the big silver five-franc pieces.

"These are so heavy," she said to the waiter. "May I not have gold?"

"It is impossible, Mademoiselle; the gold is not, any more."

"Is not?"

"We have not any."

The proprietor, roving among his guests, came forward to explain.

"People," he said, with a deprecatory air, "are nervous. They have put away their gold."

"Surely——" Eleanor murmured, the rest of her question in her appealing look.

"It does not seem possible," he granted; "but who can tell? Have you the curiosity to come with me and see a suite of rooms, upstairs, vacated at four this morning by a Hungarian diplomat who received telegraph orders at midnight? He left by motor just at dawn."

Accompanying M. the Proprietor, they ascended to the apartments so hastily deserted.

Amid confusion greater than any of them had ever seen, a maid and a valet were finishing the packing of a number of trunks, hat-boxes, and other heavy luggage. The rooms looked like the wrack of a tornado.

"What," implored Eleanor, "could possibly have made necessary such a scramble?"

M. the Proprietor shrugged—he was a tall, thin man with somewhat stooped shoulders.

"How is it possible to know?" he replied. "The gentleman and his lady had been here since July first. They may have had papers of importance hidden in many receptacles—in case of search, you know—and it was necessary to assemble them in great haste, and—and not to overlook any——"

On their return to Paris, Mrs. Schram waxed quite hysterical, and made them all fearful for the results.

"If you don't make a great, big effort to control yourself," Eleanor admonished her, "you won't be able to go home. Try to think that by this time to-morrow night

you'll be sailing away toward Memphis, with all this war-talk far behind."

When they got her to her room, Amy was put in charge of her—not because Amy could conceivably be of any use, but because it was a plausible way of eliminating her from the very earnest consultation which Stephen and Eleanor held with Miss Mudge.

"That poor young thing," Eleanor said of Irene Schram, "has heard things which would have terrified all her senses out of her even if she had ever had any. He must have counted on her infatuation for him to make her a safe repository for his bragging; or else done it in his cups. But I never saw one, yet, that didn't have to swagger and brag."

"Just the same," Stephen interposed, gravely, "I begin to believe that she's not raving. If I hadn't been in Germany, I couldn't comprehend that a supposedly civilised nation would seize on a tiny pretext like that assassination, to plunge into war. But, unless all my perceptions are wrong, they are spoiling for a fight—partly because the 'bully' spirit has been bred in them by their mediæval government; and partly for greed of extension and power. They want to pervade the universe. They try to do it, everywhere they go. That noisy assertiveness with which they make places hideous, all over Europe, is no mere lack of culture, I tell you—no negative thing—it is a cult in itself, a cult of exultant savagery. Maybe this girl's husband was bragging in an irresponsible way, just to impress her—telling her what his nation would do, as a braggart boy tells of his father's prowess. But maybe he wasn't. Maybe he knew something of the plans. At any rate, I want to urge both you women to think very seriously if you ought not to go with the others in the morning. It might be that you couldn't go, later, if trouble came——"

"Oh, shoo!" Emily Mudge exclaimed. "I guess an American citizen can go home whenever she wants to—no matter whose Archduke is assassinated!"

"If," retorted Stephen grimly, "you had lived in my part of the world, you wouldn't feel such confidence in the respect of other powers for the rights of American citizens. Down where I used to live, you get just as much protection for your life or your interests as you can make for yourself with your wits and your six-shooter."

Eleanor wished she might have had this talk with Stephen alone; but if any one else meant to sail to-morrow, there was no time to be lost in coming to a decision—no time to find out, as she would have loved to do, what Stephen's impulse was and to make her plans in conformity with it. She was afraid that the peril—real or apprehended—of the moment, might force Stephen, out of consideration for her safety and that of this woman who was a stranger to them, to some indecisive action which would confuse or inconclusively terminate the long struggle of the past months.

"Fiddle!" said Emily Mudge. "I'm not going home. If my flag doesn't protect me, I'll get a six-shooter. I want to see this thing through. I'm interested in it—and I loathe the very thought of Federal Street! You needn't stay a minute to take care of me, though—neither of you!"

Eleanor's heart gave a leap of thanks for that—and then seemed to miss a beat in the suspense of waiting for Stephen's reply.

"I haven't," he said, coolly, "any desire to go back. All that I care about is here. But I'm a man—I can fight, and endure. If they're coming into Paris, as she says, I can diminish the conquering heroes by one or two, at least. I can starve, if a siege comes—I'm used to hardship. You're not. Don't let love of excitement mislead you. Try to think that in a month you may be penned up here with no chance of escape. No matter how good Federal Street looks to you then, you can't get there if the Germans surround Paris."

"Are you going?"

Emily Mudge almost hurled the question at Eleanor.

And it was Stephen's turn to hold a heart-beat till her answer came.

"Certainly not. But it's different with me: I have my home here—everything I own——"

Emily Mudge looked at them, and her keen blue eyes clouded, mistily.

"There's only one possible place on earth for either of you, and that's where the other is," she said, huskily. "There's no one who makes one place different from another for me. But I'm getting something, over here, that makes me feel I'm alive. And I'm going to stay!"

The only change of plan was that it was Stephen and not Eleanor who went to Cherbourg with Amy and Mrs. Schram. He would have felt fully adequate to the undertaking even without any knowledge of French; but Eleanor, in planning to go, thought Irene Schram might be vacillating or "weepy" at the last moment before embarking, and difficult for Stephen to deal with. As things looked on Tuesday night, though, he was unwilling to let her go.

"From the talk I hear, mobilisation may be ordered at any moment," he urged, "even if only as a precautionary measure. But the railways would immediately suspend all traffic and move only troops—you might be marooned up there. I can't let you do it. If Mrs. Schram balks, I'll leave her and let her wait for another Samaritan."

But Mrs. Schram did not balk. She had heard brag-gart threats of a certain policy of frightfulness which would make people speedily repent of any resistance offered to Germany; and she was fleeing from these specters with little regret for anything left behind. Albert's charms as a husband had not been sufficient to blind her to the brutality of his thinking.

Stephen took the first train back to Paris, and arrived in the early hours of Thursday morning.

That day, the chauffeur with whose family Stephen

lodged, was notified to be in readiness for a call to join his regiment.

Paris, however, seemed unable to take seriously the thought of war. In the cafés, people discussed the war-cloud—but only as something that must soon pass over a serene and smiling summer land. If the crowd of tourists thronging the shops and streets and museums, had fewer Teutons than usual, no one made sad significance of the fact. But a peculiar restlessness was palpitant in the warm, golden haze of mid-summer.

Toward four o'clock, Stephen drove the car up onto the summit of the Butte Montmartre besides the Basilica which both he and Eleanor had some curiosity to see at close range, after having watched it float, fairy-like, above Paris in the grey mists of winter and the golden mists of spring, summer and autumn. The compensation of Emily Mudge was to be the view of the City Beautiful, which she enjoyed quite alone (in the ramshackle observatory on the brow of the butte) until the others had made their inspection of Sacré-Cœur.

"I've been in the clouds," she said when they came to join her, "and I like it. I wonder if it feels this way when we go to—to stay? I don't feel the ache and pain and stress and sin that's down there," she went on, nodding toward the city outspread below them, her loveliness revealed rather than concealed by the slight veil of shimmering gold-tissue which enwrapped her; "I feel only the beauty into which she has been developing, for centuries; and the success of her struggle for liberty. That must be what our world's all like, from—from Up There."

Stephen's memory went winging back to the first time he had stood on a height with Eleanor and overlooked a fair city—from the defence roof of the Davanzati Palazzo. How many, many years ago it seemed—instead of only two! And as they tried to think, then, of the blood shed in the long struggle for popular, representative government

(which is Europe's epic) how little they had been able to comprehend it compared with what they now felt.

A great reservoir of city water is on the summit of that hill where the first preachers of Christianity in Paris suffered martyrdom; and the soldiers who were on guard there against a possible attempt to poison the water-supply (and impede mobilisation) were preparing their supper after a fashion suggestive of the battlefield rather than the cabaret quarter of "gay Páree." But if one turned away from them, and gazed down to the city, it was impossible to believe in war. Through centuries of strife, France had attained to democracy, and religious liberty, and educational eminence, and beneficence of science, and so many another desideratum of human happiness and advancement, that all the world came to her to study her graces of living. What was there left for her to win through blood? Not theirs, who stood on her martyrs' hill that day, to see what she was to win, for herself and for humanity, by wearing a martyrs' crown! But as he looked eastward, toward the Buttes-Chaumont and Père-Lachaise, and tried to imagine the oncoming of those who might have said that they would be in Paris by August twentieth, Stephen knew that Love had revealed to him his heirship of all the best that men had lived and died for in the ages; and he meant, somehow, to defend that inheritance, in the behalf of those to come. That is life—simple, heroic, linking yesterday with to-morrow, and becoming immortal; with Love to show the way and Love to sweeten eternity.

They dined *chez Champoux*, facing the closed Bourse; and afterwards drove up and down the Grands Boulevards as far as the Place de la Bastille, at the snail's pace permitted by the dense throngs which an army of sergeants de ville barely sufficed to control. In front of the newspaper offices, where illuminated bulletins were being displayed, the excitement was intense, and anti-war sentiment

was vociferously expressed. Montmartre seemed to have emptied its night-riders into the boulevards: its strange, pallid hybrids of the international vice-dens; its garish cottages of that world Paris maintains for its depraved and morbid guests from all nations; its Apaches, and sin-mongers of every sort and every race; a sorry-looking band whose aversion from the light of day was easily explicable.

"It's like the Revolution, or the Commune," Emily Mudge murmured; "I didn't know there was anything like it left in France."

"Does it frighten you?" Stephen asked her.

"For myself, no! For Paris, yes!"

"You know what rises to the surface when any pot begins to boil?"

"Scum? Yes!"

"And this," Eleanor interposed, "is not only the scum of France, but the scum of the earth."

Nevertheless, they all felt very anxious as they laid themselves down to sleep that night—anxious not for their personal safety, but for the safety of those ideals whose preciousness transcends that of any life or even of all lives.

On Friday, the last day of July, the diplomatic quibbling still seemed unreal, other-worldly—or at least as remote from the actualities of their life as a reported controversy between the Chileans and the Patagonians. But currency had practically vanished from circulation, the Bourse was closed, thousands of Teutonic foreigners were fleeing from France, and talk of mobilisation filled the air. On every home, the shadow lay. And yet no one seemed able to believe other than that it would quickly pass.

Emily Mudge wanted to ride around Paris on the inner side of the first *Enceinte*, to see if anything warlike was observable there. But linen was bleaching, as usual, on the grassy slopes, and children were rolling down the banks in play, and leisurely citizens of the Third Republic were

sleeping in sylvan comfort a few feet on the hither side of the moat and glacia.

They dined at Marguery's, sole patrons with the exception of an agitated English family hastening out of Germany and taking the night train for Calais.

"We were at Bad Nauheim," the father of this family said, "and since the eighteenth we have not been able to sleep, nights, because of the rumble of trains. We could see them from our windows—long strings of passenger coaches with all lights out and all curtains drawn—endlessly going by, from eleven or so at night until dawn—scarcely an interval between them—and every night. I tell you, Germany's been mobilising for more than a fortnight."

The desolation of these usually thronged rooms was supreme. A note attached to the menu stated that the management, while desirous of serving its patrons, was unable to make change, and begged that no orders be given unless the guest was provided with the exact amount he would need in payment.

If nobody was dining, there was no lack of persons on the streets. Late editions of the evening papers were selling by the thousands of copies; and popular songs, written and printed in the heat of that day, were being sung and sold. Every shade of political, religious, philosophical and other opinion, was being brought to the attention of as many as could be made to listen to it.

A few blocks along the Boulevards, an idolised leader who had just come from making a superb protest against war, was shot to death in a manner diabolically planned to seem the work of French militarists and to keep French socialists from rallying to the defence of their Government. (Strange, Divinely-controlled bungling! For, with a pen dipped, as it were, in the blood of that good man Jaurès, Hervé rallied the socialists of his country to bare their breasts to the foes of France—reminding them that they were to fight not Germans, but Germany, an outworn,

mediæval despotism; and that French courage must help Germans to Liberty and a Republic.)

It was a night of suspense; but hope still outweighed fear. War was simply inconceivable.

Saturday, the first of August, was a day as fair as a lovely woman in her full maturity: calm, benign, smiling, the harvests of her life assured, the frosts still afar off.

At one o'clock, thousands of Paris shops were closed and shuttered, and tens of thousands of workers streamed into the streets to go their various ways on their weekly half-holiday.

Driving his two women-folk up and down different quarters of the city and waiting for them while they got out and loitered here and there in holiday groups, Stephen was not able to find that the war-cloud was more than second in importance, seemingly, to the usual first thought of Parisians on a summer Saturday afternoon: the pleasure of being outdoors in a bright, animated and intensely interesting world.

Toward four o'clock, Emily Mudge suggested a drive out of town, through some of the small communities, to see how they seemed to be waiting for the great news.

"I don't suppose," she said, "anything could make the French warlike in the midst of a perfectly good half-holiday."

"I don't believe," Eleanor announced, a little more warmly, perhaps, than was necessary, because Miss Mudge had not meant her observation critically, "anything could make the French warlike on any kind of a day. I never saw a bellicose French person in my life. Their world is full of pleasantness. They love their work and they love their play and they love their families and they love their homes—they love France, and they love life. They don't care who shot Archduke Ferdinand!"

"But if the Germans are coming here—?" Emily Mudge persisted.

Eleanor shuddered.

"I can't think about it!" she murmured. "These people are not made for war."

At the Porte de la Muette, in the Bois, they were advised not to go beyond the fortifications, because they might have difficulty about returning.

"Mobilisation," the guard said, "has just been ordered. We have been notified by telephone from the Ministry of War."

Mobilisation! Well, it might be only precautionary, of course. It *must* be only that!

The word went through Paris with incredible swiftness—not from quivering lips to straining ears, alone; but leaping, without aid of speech, from heart to heart in a spiritual marvel of communication as wonderful as the way air waves carry messages instantly across thousands of miles of land and sea.

It needed no lively imagination to see the difference in every one's attitude that even ten minutes' dissemination of the news made.

Stephen drove back along the Avenue Victor Hugo toward the *Arc de Triomphe* and set down the two women at Miss Mudge's hotel. Ten minutes later he had his car at the garage, subject to the command of the War Office. He was without a job. Of his four months' pay he had, after reimbursing Eleanor for her advances to him during four previous months, about sixty dollars: two hundred-franc notes, four twenty-franc gold pieces, and some small change. The deposits returned to him by the Touring Club of France, amounting to several hundred dollars were banked with the *Crédit Lyonnais*. In one of his pockets was a letter from Hugh Blaikie, received that morning, and reporting conditions in Mexico to be very bad.

"I am not presuming to suggest, Governor," Hughie wrote; "but you know as well as I do that there are many things you can do in this part of the world to protect your own interests, that nobody can do for you half as well."

Yes, Stephen did know it. He tried to tell himself that

there probably wasn't a person on earth—except Eleanor—who would not say that his post of duty was at Nogales or Montezuma, and not here in France in a struggle that involved none of his rights or possessions. But he was strangely unmoved by this reminder. He had made a brave fight, once, for his right to possess, to be an adventurer in El Dorado and a discoverer of its treasures. Later, he had contended for his right to love. Possessions had taught him how little they can satisfy the soul. Love had come to him in such measure, of such quality, as few men know. For a while, so parched was he for its sweet, life-giving waters, that he did not think beyond the restoring of his soul. Now, he was beginning to feel great love's demand for great expression. The desire to give as he had been given unto, was the strongest he had ever known. Dante, in such a mood, "once prepared to paint an angel," and Raphael, under like stress, "made a century of sonnets." Stephen's yearning, however, was different, in that he was wistful less to do something for his Lady's eye alone, to show her how her love had wrought in him, than to do something for the world's sake, to express his beatitude. Because of all that Eleanor had taught him and redeemed him unto, he desired with his whole heart to serve those ideals whose preciousness he had discovered hand in hand with her in this Nuova Vita. As a defender of the faith that was in him, he might be able to do very little toward the result of making it secure to unborn generations. But for his own soul's sake he must do what he could—to the uttermost—to 'quit him of his glorious debt to Love.

As he walked back to the hotel, he read in every face he passed—The News! There could be no mistaking that they all knew. Some looked stunned, and a few looked despairing or terrified. But his strongest impression was, like every one's, of calm courage and resolution so great that it was awesome.

The call had come, and with one voice France had an-

swered. From her poppy-strewn fields of golden wheat, her sunny vineyard slopes, her great green levels of sugar-beet; from the upland solitudes where shepherds tend her sheep and goats, and from the compact little villages where kith and kine dwell affectionately together; from shops and studios and lecture halls and factories; the sons of France were coming to defend her, and their women were bidding them God-speed. Dullest among them, and most world-enlightening, each knew after some fashion of his own what was imperilled; and, because of all it had meant to him, gave his breast gladly to withstand against the assaulting foe.

With no others of his fellows since men began to stand for enlightenment and liberty, would Stephen rather have found himself.

It was the greatest hour in human history. And Stephen Bellas was a part of it, because his love had made him so.

CHAPTER XXXIV

WHATEVER idea Miss Mudge might have had, next morning, of seeking the company of Eleanor and Stephen, she abandoned with sharp decision.

"Let them alone, Emily Mudge," she charged herself. "They have more than enough of you to put up with. And you don't need any confidence from them to tell you that this is a time of big decisions. You've no man to give for Liberty; and every one of these women who are giving their heart's blood, must feel that you're a rank outsider. They don't know how barren you feel because you've only your old withered self to give. But you do!"

Over the glinting river, beyond the golden dome that roofs Napoleon's dust, above the convent tree-tops, Stephen was drying the breakfast dishes of Brittany-ware, with their quaint little figures of Breton peasant men in wide breeches and large, round hats with long black velvet streamers, and of Breton peasant women in amplitudinous skirts with bodices, and picturesque caps. Every task these two could share was a tender joy to them, and the little acts of ministry at this home-altar were especially precious after their long absence. Even with all the anxieties of the past ten days, Stephen was like a boy in his delight as he greeted each dear, familiar thing, and resumed his old routine of bringing rolls and fresh butter, cream and new-laid eggs with him when he came to breakfast. He liked to lay the table, if Eleanor had not anticipated him. And he dried plates and cups, folded Italian homespun and laid it away, with the air of a devout man handling sacred vessels and vestments. Eleanor never tired of watching him, out of the corner of her eye, as he did these homely things. The home-hunger in him, his wistfulness to share with her

in each little act that made this place heart-filling, was infinitely appealing to her.

Her eyes were misty as she watched him now. For she knew, as well as he did, what he was thinking.

"There must," he said, polishing beyond the most exacting housewifery a small porringer which had cost ten sous, "be tens of thousands of men in France this morning who——"

He hesitated; it was hard to say.

"I know," she murmured.

"If," he went on, standing closer to her, "it—comes, I must help—as I can—of course."

"Of course!"

"It doesn't seem to you at all—superfluous?"

"For you to offer yourself?"

"Yes."

"Not at all."

"They can win, doubtless, without me."

"Doubtless."

"But that is not the point."

"No; that is not the point."

"You thought I would feel this way?"

"I knew it."

"And you are glad I do?"

"Yes."

They were silent for a minute or two, while she hung away her dishpan and rinsed her hands in clear water. Then she came close to him, wound her arms about his shoulders, and buried her face in his breast.

He patted her, softly, soothingly, restraining himself from gripping her as he was impelled to do.

"This is," he murmured, his head bent so that his cheek lay against her hair, "the only thing that could take me from you. And—you know—don't you, darling?—that it is you, and my love of you and all you've taught me, that makes it impossible for me not to go?"

She lifted her tear-wet face and looked at him.

"Yes, yes!" she sobbed. "I know it. Of course I know it! And I wouldn't have it any other way, for all the world. If my love bound you, I couldn't bear the shame of it. But, oh! God in Heaven, what women must be suffering, to-day!"

For hours they sat and discussed plans—not knowing when they might have another opportunity.

It was entirely conjectural what Stephen might be permitted to do. But in case the offer of his services were to be accepted promptly or suddenly, he wanted everything to be quite clear.

"I shall make a new will," he said, "leaving you a third of my estate. Lucile will get her dower right, and Eileen as much more. I am sure I can have this attested and filed here, so there can be no question of it. And I'll notify Hugh Blaikie—send him a copy."

"I wish you wouldn't, dear," she demurred. "I can get along very well—earn my own way——"

"Not if you were ill, or disabled, or anything!"

"—and it would make talk about you if—if anything happened, and this will were read——"

"I want it to make talk! I shall word it so it will be sure to."

"Ah, no, dear!"

"I certainly shall! The fear of a little clatter from busybodies' tongues was stronger, in the lady who bears my name, than any sense she might have had of my rights or wishes. Because she didn't want the people she's trying to impress, in Los Angeles, to know how little she is to me, she refused to release me from our contract—just as she refused before we were married, when I tried so hard to get free without making 'people talk' about her. If she is to get two-thirds of all I have, in addition to her home, and her income from what I've already given her, she shall not get it without a dose of the 'talk' for fear of which she was willing to keep me from you."

That Stephen should feel no resentment against Lucile

would have been so inconsistent with the man's strength of his nature, and the ardour of his desire for Eleanor, that no one who loved him could reprehend his fury. But Eleanor, if she did not blame him for it, certainly never encouraged him in this bitterness. She was afraid of it—afraid of it in herself and in him. She was afraid of hate. It seemed to her that if one gave lodgment for the briefest time, in the most deprecatory way, to that horrid guest, one should expect to find her pervading the mind's house, usurping the place of noble company and driving it away. So, as resolutely as she could, she had always shut the door of her heart against an emotion which nothing in her life hitherto had ever invited.

It had never been so hard, though, for her to think without bitterness of Lucile as it was now, in the shadow of this separation that impended. If she could have been Stephen's wife and the mother, or hopeful to become the mother, of his child, it seemed to her that so she could have borne more easily the giving him up to that which he felt he must do. But for the selfishness of that woman, five thousand miles away, to whom Stephen had given so much and from whom he had received so little, the bond between Eleanor and her beloved might have been perfected and made complete before he had to leave her.

Conscious of this restraint in herself, she was also conscious of the will and, she believed, the power to keep it unexpressed. When Stephen spoke his bitter wrath, she was frightened—not being able to see how she could leave her own defensive to help him drive away this black invader. He must not, she told herself, go away—to face death—with rage in his heart.

The whole thought of her age made her shrink from hate. Generations of deputed redress had not only atrophied in her the desire for personal conflict as a means of settling her status with any one; they had almost smothered in her the spark of mental resentment—made her ashamed to let a breath fan it.

Events were conspiring against this habit of mind. But she did not foreshadow their coming. A million grey-clad men marching, that moment, against helpless wee Luxemburg and against gallant but almost helpless little Belgium, were on their way to do more than violate treaties and spread terror by the sword and worse than the sword: they were letting loose such surging, lashing fury of resentment as was to teach half the world a new habit of thought.

Eleanor was to learn not to shrink from feeling protest, nor from expressing it—was to learn, when her soul burned against injustice, to strike whatever blows she could in the behalf of what she felt was right. But the habit of other years was still strong in her; and though she believed, ardently, that right was with her and not with the woman who was refusing her the joy of being Stephen's wife, she was afraid to take, even in her own mind, the stand of protest against that woman's selfishness—and equally afraid to let Stephen take it.

His manner of thinking was, however, less overlaid with restrictions. He was a peace-loving man, willing to make great renunciation rather than contend for what he desired. But protest was not foreign to him. He felt it against Prussian absolutism, to the extent that he was willing to die to defend the world against it. And as he contemplated the possibility of his death, his ire against the injustice of his own situation grew.

"I don't want you to do anything like that on my account," Eleanor demurred.

"I'm not doing it on your account," he answered, shortly. "I'm doing it on my own. I've a right to love, and to marriage with the woman I love—and to give her my name, when I go forth to battle—my name and my possessions. I've been cheated of my birthright, to keep a woman I never loved, and who never loved me, in idleness and luxury. I don't know where my man's spirit has been, all along, to endure this that should never have been

endured. I'm not the sort of man to sit down under any tyranny and make no stand against it! I can't think how that one got me so completely. But if I live to come out of this, which is so much higher than any right of my own that I dare not think of myself until I've discharged this obligation—then I'll demand justice in Los Angeles! And if I don't come out, you shall have at least enough of all I had to do as much as money can of what I would have done to care for you. Living or dead, my protest against what stands between us shall be made."

He was in no mood for argument, so Eleanor made none—but led their talk into other channels as dexterously as she could.

At two o'clock, loath to leave their little haven and fare forth into the world of sorrow without, they got themselves a light luncheon of such edibles as they could find—the thought haunting them, as they prepared it, that they could not tell how close upon them their last meal together in this blessed place might be.

When it was over, it suddenly occurred to them that not in hours had they remembered the existence of Emily Mudge.

But neither, they soon learned, had Emily Mudge especially remembered theirs.

They dined with her at her hotel that night. Few restaurants were open, and in the first panic—soon checked—of a closed city under martial law, food was rather difficult to get, even if one had currency to pay for it, which many persons did not have.

A la carte service was everywhere discontinued. But there was no sign of stringency in the six-course table d'hôte dinner offered them—by what miracle of management they could not comprehend—in the gorgeous *salle-à-manger* with its glittering crystal chandeliers, its pomp of service, and its air of splendid, immobile calm.

The most frenzied among the American guests were either in mad flight to some place or other, or upstairs

in bed, indulging in more hysteria than all the millions of women in France who had given or were giving their best-beloved to their country.

At a table very near Miss Mudge's sat an elderly couple—a small, highly refined, delicate-looking French lady of sixty, perhaps, and her husband, a man of one of the learned professions, probably, and distinguished in his practice of it. They had come into town very hastily, it seemed, from their summer home in the country, to say adieu to their son, a captain of artillery, who was leaving that night.

Madame was dressed for dinner, in the perfection of taste for the occasion—not evening dress, of course, (it was long before Paris saw that again) but a charming demi-toilette of smoky-grey chiffon made with that gentle superiority to the mode of the moment which characterises the Parisienne of her class.

Monsieur, her husband, was in correct Sunday afternoon attire. His courtesies to her were just a trifle fluttering—betraying his anxiety on her account—but gravely sweet and evidently accustomed. And her acceptance of them was tenderly touched with effort to make him feel how calm and cheerful she was. But her eyes betrayed her, often, as they gazed with straining wistfulness toward the door.

He did not come, that captain of artillery; and Monsieur his father urged Madame his mother to eat her dinner—because he might be much delayed for whom they waited.

And she obeyed—that little mother. Her small hands were trembling as with a violent ague; but somehow she managed to convey soup to her mouth quite steadily, and to make a heroic show of eating each course as it was served her. Smilingly, her husband approved her, and with heroism as great as hers, he also ate as if he believed what he was telling her: that this mobilisation would doubt-

less be for moral effect only, until the diplomatic uneasiness was settled.

Then he came, their son, in his immaculate uniform; a small, delicately-made, almost fragile-looking man in his mid-thirties—his hands scarcely more rugged than those which trembled so fearfully in his mother's lap—his feet, in their shiny boots, seeming fitter for a military ball than for the mire of battlefields. But in his eyes burned the spirit that saved France; the spirit against which neither sinews nor the world's greatest fighting organisation could prevail.

With the air of one who, from his superior military information, realised that this mobilisation was merely to show Germany how ready France was to stand by her ally, Russia, he greeted his parents smilingly, and bore himself with a sweet little whimsical gallantry as if he thought it quite a comedy—this letting the Germans see that Frenchmen are not to be trifled with.

His mother nodded and smiled as if she thought so, too—but her hands, out of her men's sight, below the table, fluttered like wounded birds.

He, also, ate the good dinner—that captain of artillery—or at least he appeared to. And then, apologising for his haste, he rose to go. He took the right hand of his little mother and, bending above it, pressed a long kiss thereon, in token of that devotion in which he went to his *devoir*; then he opened his arms and clasped her in an embrace no lover could have outdone in passion or in tenderness. His father accompanied him to the door. The little lady resumed her seat and her effort to regard this as only a precautionary rally of France's defenders. But she could remember "Seventy," and the smiling, nonchalant men who never came back. The mother in her was stronger than the desire to deny fear. She hastened out of the room after her husband and son, and clung to her boy in one more embrace before he vanished into the night. (He knew no more than she did whither he was going under

those sealed orders. If word reached him it must be through La Poste Militaire. If word came from him, it must come out of the wide spaces of "Somewhere in France"—or beyond France!) Then she returned with her husband to their table and smiled into his eyes while they awaited their *addition*. That was also part of what she owed to France.

Emily Mudge's face was twitching uncontrollably. Stephen's eyes were brimming. Eleanor was very, very white and still, with a strange, transfixed look, as if the realisation that this was happening in hundreds of thousands of places, and that it was soon to happen to her also, had stopped the beating of her heart and let her freeze into the semblance of death.

Alarmed, Stephen reached out his hand and touched her.

"Dearest!" he whispered, imploringly.

She raised her left hand—the one he was not warmly grasping—to her eyes, with a gesture as of one waking from a dreadful dream.

"I saw them marching," she murmured; "just as she said—Irene Schram. I saw him going out against them—in the night—so gallant and reassuring——"

"Take her out," Emily Mudge directed Stephen. "I'll follow in a moment."

He obeyed.

When Eleanor moved, obedient to his urging, the trance of her horror was broken (as a nightmare is, by a slight shift in posture) and she readily regained her self-control. But the memory of what she had seemed to see, remained.

"They can't believe in war—these child-hearted people," she said. "But I see it coming, like a tidal wave. I don't know how or why, but I do—to-night. I haven't been able to believe it, any more than they do—but to-night, I do! That officer made me clairvoyant, as it were. When he went out of the dining-room, I could see him going, like a

child, against great hosts. It was so real! I felt as if I were dead, of horror."

They went out with Emily Mudge to walk in the streets.

Young fellows in clumsy, ill-fitting uniforms walked down the Avenue des Champs-Élysées toward the Gare de l'Est, arms entwined with their girl-sweethearts—laughing. Fathers trudged eastward, surrounded by close-clinging groups—frequently with a baby in the left arm, extra shoes and other necessities slung over the right shoulder, small children clinging to the right hand, and Mother as near as she could get to the arm encircling baby. Sons walked proudly, to show mothers how unfounded were their fears. Everybody tried to smile. No one wept—at least, not on the way to the station.

There was nothing military about it—no marching troops nor martial music and flutter of colours. It was just everybody's husband and father and son and sweetheart going away mysteriously in the night to defend France against her foes—or to make such a brave showing that the swaggering bullies from over the Rhine would run home again, as everybody knows a bully often does when he sees fight in his opponent's eye. Of course! Germany had caught France napping, once—disorganised and somnolent under an empire that had "happened to them," somehow, when they thought their Republic was re-established. They thought they could do it again—those noisy braggarts! Well, they should see! Nevertheless, it did seem a good deal as if your Louis and my Jean were not really soldiers, for all their flapping blue coats with the red lining showing where the fronts were buttoned back, and their very red trousers which (somehow) never fit but all seemed to have been made for much larger and more militant men. If Rembrandt had been here, who was so inspired by the dramatic qualities of that moment when at the alarum of the tocsin Amsterdam's civil guard left off being tradesmen and bankers and barristers, and became soldiers of Banning Cock's company, what might he not have painted

from these home-makers hurrying to their homes' defence?

Vehicular traffic was practically vanished from the streets, save for the occasional flashing-by of an automobile filled with officers. But one noticed the absence of conveyances scarcely at all—there was so much else to think about.

On the morrow, however, it was very different. The stillness of the great city woke nearly every one earlier than his wont was. All cities are noisy, but Paris is the noisiest. Where, this strangely-hushed August morning, was the rumble and rattle and creak of carts coming in to the markets? Ah, yes! the city gates were closed and no food was entering. Why no sounds of hammer and saw, of stone-scraping and copper-beating, and the chink of the farrier's sledge on the shoe he shapes on his anvil? Slowly, one remembers: they went away, last night—those aforetime busy artisans. But the honk of the auto horns, and the tinkle of cab-horse bells, and the clatter of bakers' and butchers' carts? All stilled! Was there ever such an awesome leaving-off of all the sounds of a busy human hive—ever, since Pompeii?

CHAPTER XXXV

L IÈGE had fallen, and Namur. Louvain was in ruins. Brussels was occupied—and Ghent—and Bruges. By the millions, Germans were pouring into France, drunk with the blood of Belgium and with the contents of her cellars. The unexpected resistance at Liège had delayed them somewhat. They had taken Brussels on August twentieth, but not Paris. They were coming, though.

Stephen asked Eleanor if she did not think she ought to go south, or to Brittany—she and Miss Mudge.

"Where are you going?" she demanded.

"Out to meet them, if there's a way on earth to do it," he answered. "If not, I hope to kill the first one who comes in here."

"That's sniping!" she cried. "Think of the reprisals."

"You're right. But there'll be some other way for me, I'm sure."

It was late evening, and they were standing at the window of that dear place which meant so much to them, looking out over the hushed blackness that was Paris—watching the long shafts of the searchlights flash across the sky.

His left arm encircled her and held her close against him. With his right hand he softly touched her hair, her cheek, then raised her face so he could kiss her.

"I can't go, either," she said. "I'm not afraid. And I know I can be of enough service so that, if I eat some of the food, I can also do some of the work there'll be to do. I want to live, darling. I want to be yours—more than I've been—all there is that a woman can be to a man. But—do you feel this? You do, though! I know you do!—love like ours is the sort of love that makes it impossible for us to think of—well, of trying to go off somewhere and

forget everybody and everything, and hope for happiness that way. Sometimes, I wish we could. Seems as if I want nothing but just to be with you, somewhere, forever and a day—just you! and never be disturbed. But of course I know love can't live, that way—not in this world! It's what love makes us do, that counts—isn't it?—that makes us happy because it quickens the immortal thing in us? When we know we're serving that immortal thing, we're happy. And when we know we're not serving it, we're wretched—aren't we?"

"Yes—that's a good statement of the way I figure it all out. Times like these teach us a lot—don't they? Of course, conscription makes it a little harder to tell—and yet, I haven't any reason to believe the results would have been very different if there'd been no compulsion. In some fashion of his own, even the dumbest 'brother to the ox' who has gone clumping away from his ripe harvest fields, seems to realise that there are things beyond the needs of his body or even the hunger of his heart, that he must serve. I'm no philosopher—just a plain man of simple, daily-bread kind of action. Yet it's all quite simple to me—at least, as far as my part in it is concerned: I'm a guest in the house of a friend—a dear friend, more than a brother, except in the rarest instances of brotherhood; in my friend's house, I have had sweetest courtesy and warmth of kindness and great benefit for my mind and for my soul; he has shared his treasures with me to the uttermost and showed me many new meanings of life; I believe with much fervour that he is a great teacher and a great host—that the ideals he cherishes are in many respects the finest and the freest man has ever had. He is attacked—my friend! A ravaging, pillaging, barbarian horde is descending on him, hoping to bind and shackle and rob him—to loot him, and rape his women, and mutilate his children and put them in the bondage of the dark ages. I can't see anything debatable about my obligation. My friend is loath to let me take my place beside him at the point of

attack—although he was close beside my forefathers when they fought for their liberty! But fighting is only a small part of war. There must be other things I can do. And I'm here to do them. There are no two ways about it—are there?"

"No, dear—no two ways for either of us."

"We're sure of that, Love? So sure that, whatever happens——"

"Whatever happens——!"

"You will always know that no woman was ever so much to any man, not since the world began?"

"Always! that is my crown! And no woman ever had so sweet-souled a man to love. Knowing you, dear, has been a continual revelation to me—of the fineness, the nobility, there can be in human nature."

They talked to each other as the supremely-wedded do who cannot tell how close they may be standing to the threshold of eternity. For that grey host was not many miles from Paris; and at any moment, death might drop from one of the great raiders far up in the black sky.

In a shed off the courtyard of the house wherein he lodged, Stephen had been busy, at odd moments for almost a month, assembling such rejected and overlooked automobile parts as he could collect, into a workable motor. What he might do with it was conjectural, at first. Then when word of the almost total lack of motor ambulances reached him, he hurriedly equipped his chassis with a top in which stretchers could be swung; and with this, he became a member of a field ambulance unit which was privileged to do unremitting service at the battle of the Marne.

The fighting was at Château-Thierry when Stephen began his dashes to the front after seriously wounded men. Then it was at La Ferté-sous-Jouarre, and at Coulommiers—for the possession of the main highway between Paris and the east—then at Meaux! Twenty-eight

miles from Paris! And still the daily order is "Fall back!"

What can it mean? Are the men of France never to stand?

And yet, how could they stand, those spectres, those exhausted men? For days they had scarcely eaten—only a nibble now and then, as they fell back, and back, fighting all the way. For nights upon nights they had not slept, save as they lost consciousness while they retreated and the rear lines fought. For days and nights of burning heat and choking dust, their thirst had not been slaked—for themselves they had not once murmured, but some of them cried to see the questioning agony in the eyes of their horses.

The men Stephen conveyed to hospitals—the men whose blood dripped in red trails along the lovely river-road—seemed far less near to death than those who still stumbled in the ranks, their eyes glittering with an unearthly light in their pallid, grimed, stubble-grown faces that were gaunt with hunger, gray with thirst, and graven with soul-anguish most terrible.

Seventeen miles to Paris! Perhaps they *could* defend it! Why, oh, why, was the order always "Fall back!"

Then, at last, the other order came: "Soldiers of France, you will hold your ground."

And they held it! Not with their exhausted bodies, but with their flaming souls. The greatest fighting machine the world has ever known, the perfect expression of the most materialistic and most militaristic government in human history—came rolling on against that wavering, retreating line of red and blue—on and on and on, with increasing swagger as the distance to Paris shortened—and then stopped—and looked—and fled—and the war, though it had a long, frightful course to go, was won when forty years of preparedness had to re-make all its calculations and dig itself in.

Civilisation was saved—saved by the soul of France. "Remember this, my children, in the day when your country shall have need of all your courage."

CHAPTER XXXVI

IN the midst of heroism not merely general but universal, it seemed to Stephen that he was the least of all those in any way engaged in the conflict. What he did, he scarcely knew. But when he could, he picked up men with severe but probably not fatal wounds, and rushed them to whatever place he had been ordered to take them. It was all exceeding simple. He felt no more important than the water-boy with a surveying squad. He could not remember that he had taken any extraordinary risks. Certainly he had not equalled in endurance the least of all the fighting men.

How he came to be cited for conspicuous bravery, was a mystery.

So he told Eleanor. And she knew he meant it. That the mention of his name should get into the correspondence of some of those eager and much-restrained Americans representing every phase of journalism, did not occur to Stephen. But when there was so much that military authorities would not permit newspaper men to know, and so much even of what they did know, or could surmise, that the censors would not permit them to send out of France, and their "chiefs" were far from convinced that these were valid excuses for American star reporters, it was, perhaps, not so surprising that more than one correspondent's letter from "Somewhere in France" contained a paragraph about "Stephen Bellas, an American whose reckless defiance of danger in transporting the wounded has been officially commended by the general in command."

Stephen did not see these paragraphs, of course. His first intimation that there had been such, came to him when an Associated Press reporter got on his trail, acting on

orders from Los Angeles to learn if the man mentioned in the French dispatches was the wealthy mine-owner of Montezuma, Mexico, who had been mysteriously missing and was supposed to have perished in the desert a year ago.

The young man who got this clew was much excited, sensing a story in that American journalist's interpretation of the word—which means a personal disclosure of some sort, preferably one that the subject would rather not have made. In some editorial opinions—and how right or how wrong their hypothesis may be, this is not to say—events, be they never so cataclysmic, have not the power to grip the average imagination that personal experience stories have. Editors who would not pay Hilaire Belloc one guinea for his most searching analysis of the Marne campaign and its effect on Europe's destiny, give *carte blanche* to women of the "How I" magazines, to report how they felt when they heard the big guns shoot; or, if possible, to get an interview with Queen Elizabeth on "How I Decided What to Take With Me When Leaving Brussels for Antwerp." The Associated Press reporter who got the Bellas assignment had not been out of his own, his native, land so long that he had lost any of the American editors' attitude toward a "story." He knew just how much more readable than the best estimate that could be written on Joffre's out-generalizing von Kluck, would be a "discovery" of the missing mine-owner "daring death amid the carnage on the battlefields of France."

He located Stephen easily, through the Police records at the Prefecture in the Quai des Orfèvres, where Bellas was registered for residence under a date of December last, and as declaring his intent to earn his living as a chauffeur and machinist, under a date in January.

At Stephen's lodgings in the rue Barbet-de-Jouy, the reporter learned that M. Bellas was with the American Field Ambulance. Where? Ah, but it is not permitted to know!

"M. Bellas is an American?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"From what part of America?"

"I do not know, monsieur."

"He never talked about America?"

"But yes, monsieur."

"And never said where he was from?"

"It was of America he talked, monsieur, and not of himself."

"Was there anything about him that was—mysterious?"

"Not at all! He is very simple."

"Like any chauffeur?"

"Perhaps not. Why does monsieur ask?"

"Because it is thought that M. Bellas may be a rich man—owner of many mines of gold and silver in Mexico—who disappeared from his home a year ago."

Madame with whom Stephen lodged, shook her head vigorously.

"It is not possible!" she said. "M. Bellas is good mechanic, and excellent chauffeur. Since first April he has been driver for American lady—on tour—many places. When the car she used has been commandeered by the Ministry of War, M. Bellas has made, here in this place, an automobile-ambulance which he now drives."

"And the American lady—where is she?"

"I do not know, monsieur. She has lived at the Hotel Majestic. But that is closed, since beginning of the war."

"What was her name?"

"I have not heard."

No; she was not evasive, the reporter decided after a searching look. If her lodger ever referred to his employer, it was doubtless as "Madame."

"What make of car did he drive?"

With this information, the seeker betook himself elsewhere.

The car Stephen drove was a German chassis with French-built body. Its agency had not re-opened. Efforts to locate members of its Paris sales-force were unavailing. Employes of the Majestic who might remember what

American lady had used that make of car, were scattered far and wide—in several armies! But the same company operated another hotel in Paris, and at this other hotel—in the rue de Rivoli—the reporter picked up the trail which led him to—Emily Mudge.

Without the least preconception of this man Bellas's age or sort, the young man from the Associated Press suffered a severe disappointment when he saw Emily Mudge. No mine-owner had disappeared to keep tryst with her!

Miss Mudge was now living *en pension* in the Square Latour-Maubourg near the Hôtel des Invalides whither captured war trophies were brought and where they were displayed beneath her very nose, as it were—close enough, also, to the Ecole Militaire to hear, or to think she heard, shots fired there, sometimes, in the early morning when spies pay their penalty.

Emily was Stephen's confidante, now. Before he went out, the first time, onto a field of battle, he told her—with Eleanor's permission—why he was there in France; left with her the will she had witnessed for him; gave her the addresses of Blaikie, and of his attorneys; and made what arrangements he could for notification by her in case Eleanor should fall ill or have any need of him. Here was Romance indeed! Life had become, for the starved spinster from Federal Street, more vivid than she had ever dared to dream of finding it outside the pages of her favourite storytellers. Her quest of the unprosaic had been undertaken far less in any hope of relating herself to chivalry and great devotion, than in the hope of discovering that such things existed anywhere outside those printed pages wherein she had chiefly lived, hitherto. She knew, now, that they had incarnation—all about her, and also close to her. And the living world was become as full of magic as that world of yesteryears she had long dwelt in.

"Yes," she admitted, curtly, to the reporter, "a man by the name of Bellas drove my car. What of it?"

"He was mentioned in the American papers as having

been cited for bravery; and I am instructed to learn if he is the Mr. Stephen Bellas of Montezuma, Mexico, who disappeared more than a year ago and was thought to have died in the desert."

"Um," said Emily Mudge—thinking hard.

"Do you happen to know?"

"I hired him through a third party, who told me nothing about him except that he was a first-class driver and mechanic—which I found him to be."

"And this is all you know of him?"

It was a tight place, for a lady from Federal Street.

"Oh, no! That was all I knew last April. But after a man has driven you a great many thousand miles, you can't help knowing more than that about him."

"I should think you couldn't."

"I found him all that he was recommended as being—"

"Yes? And——"

"And a very quiet, retiring, dependable sort of person."

"Never talked about himself?"

"No—not in my employ," answered Miss Mudge in a tone to indicate that she did not encourage the reminiscences of chauffeurs.

It was strictly within the truth, too. Because Stephen had never given her the slightest account of himself until some weeks after he had ceased to be her employe.

"Do you know that it was your driver who was mentioned?"

"I have heard that it was."

"Haven't seen him since?"

"Young man," said Emily Mudge, "you seem to forget that I'm not on the witness stand."

"I beg your pardon. But, you see, I'm so anxious to find out. There's so little they'll let us write about, in this shindig—but here's a good story that the censor certainly can't hold up; and if I don't come across with it, my name's liable to be Dennis—which it *ain't*."

Aunt Emily was as little moved by this plea as any one to whom it was ever made.

"I'm sorry to seem indifferent," she replied, grimly. "But it is a matter of no moment to me *what* your name is."

The young man whose name was not Dennis, grinned.

"All right," he said. "I get you. I hope you don't mind if I'm not discouraged? Was any one with you on your trip?"

"My niece."

"Where is she?"

"Gone back to school in Massachusetts."

"Think this man Bellas ever talked to her?"

"Not," Aunt Emily chuckled, "when he could help it."

Nevertheless, the insistent one got her name, and her school address. It was absurd, unbelievable. But journalists were so numerous, and so desperate. And this effort really promised to result in something more interesting than the "news from the front" which was written in the divan room off the American bar at the Hotel Continental.

Emily Mudge managed, however, to keep clear of Eleanor's name. She did it without having to lie; but she was quite ready to lie handsomely, if there was no other way.

Before the reporter's efforts to reach Stephen through the Field Ambulance or through the Poste Militaire had resulted successfully, though, Stephen had heard of the inquiry, from his landlady; from Emily Mudge; from Eleanor—whom Emily had told; and of the letters in American papers from Hugh Blaikie, who enclosed a clipping.

"This has made a big sensation here," Hughie wrote. "The name is uncommon enough so that hardly any one seems to doubt it's you. I've tried to find out for you what effect it had in Los Angeles. There's none of them here, now—as I think I wrote you—Mrs. Harrod having gone to live around among the daughters, after poor old Jed died. But of course there are one or two here that she writes to. From all I can gather, the Lady in Los Angeles may be a bit disappointed. It seems there is some one

there she's been showing interest in—and not without encouragement, so to speak; kind of an afternoon tea-fighter, from all I hear—always among 'those present' at comings-out and bridge-dinners and so forth—everybody's lap-dog, and unattached yet. Some woman here that Mrs. Harrod writes to, told Mrs. Cunningham about him and his 'devotion' to Mrs. Bellas. (This sounds like an old-wives' tale, Governor; but I have to get things as I can. And as near as I can come to figuring it out, this is rather vital to you.) The pink-tea boy may find Mrs. B. less of an affinity now that his prospect of spending your earnings is remote. It is also possible that Mrs. B. may dispense with his 'sympathy,' for fear of creating talk. I'll try to get a line on the situation and report to you.

"I have safely put away the will you sent me. Pretty rotten, I call it, your having to do as you did. But I can't help envying you the chance it led you to. If you see where an old codger of fifty-four could get took on to mind the mules, or anything, you might pass me the word. I'd give all the rest of what's staked out for me for a chance to fight under Britain's colours—or even to do chores for them that are fighting. Crystal—grand old girl!—is crazy to go, too. And I bet if she did go, she could show them a thing or two. Enry has gone to France. Lufkin doesn't show a spark—he's just about plain Mex., now. Squaw-men are queer, Governor. Lord! how a man's life does take its colour from the woman-part of it.

"Situation in Mexico is abominable. Poor creatures terrorized and starving. U. S. could set things right, like a good parent does, by no more than looking as if it wouldn't stand such abuses—just as it could have prevented the violation of Belgium. I know they haven't any *force*. But good moral courage would have sufficed in both instances, I believe.

"I enclose draft for twenty pounds. This is from Crystal and me. Use it to ease things a bit for some of the boys. 'It's a long, long way to Tipperary; but my heart is there.'"

To the letters from the reporter, inquiring if he were the Mr. Bellas of Montezuma, Stephen returned no reply.

In the press of such circumstance as he then knew, near Ypres, it was a matter of the smallest possible moment to him that his secret was out, his whereabouts known. All values are relative; and that freedom to go his own way which had once been so important to him, was inconsequent now, because there was no longer any alternative way for him to go.

It did not even occur to him to wonder if Lucile would write to him—but it occurred to Eleanor, to whom he sent Hughie's letter; and it occurred to Emily Mudge.

Also, it occurred to the young gentleman from the Associated Press to get a description, from persons in Paris who had known Stephen, of Mr. Bellas's appearance, and to ask from Los Angeles the same of Montezuma's missing president. When he found that these descriptions tallied, he felt that he had all the essentials of a "bully good story," except the reason why a man should wish to leave so much and become a chauffeur for Miss Emily Mudge. No one, he was informed from America, had been able to advance a theory for Mr. Bellas's disappearance—or, if any one could, no one had done so. The urging to get this story was very strong. Even Amy, in her school in Massachusetts, was invited to conjecture what that reason might have been. But Amy had been warned by cable from Paris within an hour after her Aunt Emily realised the indiscretion of having given the reporter her name.

The work of the American Field Ambulance was beginning to awaken some interest in the United States. It was rumoured at the Paris headquarters, that Stephen Bellas might receive the Croix de Guerre. This was good "letter-from-the-front stuff"; not for cable dispatches but for signed, descriptive articles sent by post for the Sunday or other special-feature edition. It was what the American editors call a "human interest story."

Lucile, in her terror of "undesirable publicity," refused

all requests for a statement. But a very little persistence, in Los Angeles, led the local press men there to persons with no reluctance to discuss what they knew and what they did not know of the Bellas affairs. "He was seldom here." "He seemed to have no interest in his home or family." "He neglected her shamefully." "He was queer—I never could make him out—he seemed to care only for rough, camp life, and to be ill at ease in refined surroundings." "He was opposed to her social ambitions, I guess."

Wise in the ways of his craft, a Los Angeles city editor telephoned the Bellas residence, insisted on speaking with Mrs. Bellas "in her own interest," and when he got her ear, hastened to say:

"I have a story here, Mrs. Bellas, that you drove your husband away from home. I am sure it is absurd. But other papers may print it. So I want your denial."

"It's a wicked lie!" Lucile cried, heatedly. "If ever a woman tried to keep her husband at home, I did! I don't see who could have told such an untruth!"

"I don't know," said the city editor, sympathetically, "unless, perhaps, Mr. Bellas—in France—may have said something——"

But Mrs. Bellas had dropped the receiver, and flung herself, sobbing, into her mother's arms.

She granted an interview, though, an hour later. Stephen Bellas need not think he could traduce her! Oh! Such baseness was unbelievable! "It is not enough for him to desert me in that shameless way, for another woman—an adventuress! But he must blame me for his actions! For my child's sake, I will not allow it."

The next day, Lucile went to her attorney and directed him to file suit for divorce, on the grounds of desertion and infidelity. It seemed to her that in the circumstances she owed this to her dignity.

"Do you wish alimony?" her lawyer asked.

"I surely do!" she answered, acidly. "Why shouldn't he take care of me?"

CHAPTER XXXVII

WHEN it was become a matter of common knowledge in the American southwest that Stephen Bellas of Montezuma was "somewhere in France" driving an ambulance, and that for some months before the war he had been earning his living as a chauffeur, speculation on the reason for his disappearance was not only rife, it was fantastic.

There was absolutely nothing, it was stated, in the condition of his financial affairs to warrant such behaviour.

There could, then, be but one explanation! Who was she?

Lucile's suit confirmed the easy surmise, but gave no clue to the identity of the "affinity." That Lucile did not know the name of "the other woman" soon became evident. She told everything else she knew, and more than she knew, in her frantic effort to secure for herself every particle of sympathy and consideration.

Hughie was enraged at the way she not only permitted Stephen's name to be mired, but actively contributed to the obloquy.

He went to Los Angeles to see her and expostulate.

"Mrs. Bellas," he said, "people are saying things about Mr. Bellas that are damned lies; and you know they are! Why don't you stop them?"

"I don't know what you mean," Lucile lied, haughtily.

Hughie looked the scorn he dared not trust himself to speak.

"You do know what I mean," he insisted; "and you're doing the biggest part of it."

"I suppose," she said, "you mean my divorce suit—

that he has sent you here to beg me to withdraw it an' take him back. Well, I won't! Never!"

"He has not sent me. I don't know what he thinks of your suit; but I've an idea that, where he is now, it interests him mighty little. I've come here on my own account. I know the Governor better 'n you do. But you know him better 'n to believe the things about him that you're circulatin'.

"You must know that he's the cleanest-souled, highest-minded man that ever wore shoe-leather in these parts.

"Why do you encourage people to smirch his name?"

"I don't!" said Lucile.

"You do!"

"What do they say?"

"What you tell them: that he always neglected you, and that finally he told you he loved some one else and wanted you to divorce him; and when you wouldn't, he ran away."

"Well! It's all true. What kind of lies would you like me to tell?"

"No lies!" Hughie shouted. "Tell the rest of the truth! Tell how you snared him into marryin' you, and everybody that knew him was sick at heart to see him do it! Tell how many tens of thousands of dollars he has paid out for you, and how little you've ever given him for it all! Tell how, when you had refused to give him any justice, you came screechin' and ravin' down to camp and drove him into the desert with your fury! Tell how he had to flee without a cent of all that belonged to him—or stay an' put up with your demands! Tell some of these things that you know are as true as the others—or I'll tell 'em myself!"

Therewith, Hughie strode out of the bungalow, and sought Blackburn.

When he left Blackburn, his rage had not abated.

"This is a colossal piece of folly in Bellas," Blackburn pronounced, judicially. "I told him how hard it is for a man to get away with one of these affinity cases. Don't you suppose he'd be glad to come home and go on as be-

fore, if we could get this mess hushed up a little? He must be tired enough of such lunacy. Why! a boy of twenty would hardly go off his head like that. And when a man near forty gets to thinking it over, soberly, he must wish for some one to give him a good, swift kick."

Hughie overcame his desire to stride out of Blackburn's office until he had told that suave worldling a little of what Bellas had endured.

But he might better (except for his own sake) have spared the effort. For Blackburn, if empowered to do so, would on that evidence have adjudged Stephen insane and issued an order to deprive him of his liberty. Morality meant nothing to Blackburn; but expediency meant everything; and a man who defied it was, to his mind, not unwise merely but heretic, unfit to live.

Hughie might have been disgusted with the results of his trip to Los Angeles; but he wasn't.

He wrote a faithful account of it all to Stephen, overseas.

"My notion of such proceedings," he said, "is that due effort has to be made to serve you with a notice of the suit, so you can defend, if you want to. With what has been published about you, I daresay they can now reach you.

"I don't know what your idea is, and I don't like to presume so far as to advise you. That you will not wish to contest the suit, I take for granted. But I hate like the devil to see her make all the accusations and have none made against her. I'm not sure it's right—the attitude that men of your sort commonly take, refusing to make counter-charges. Yet it seems to be 'the law' that if it were known how she provoked you to flight, her petition might be refused—and there you'd be!

"Most law is farcical at times—when you look at it without prejudice—but divorce law is the funniest. For it seems that when two people want to quit, they can't. But when one wants to and the other wants *not* to, it can be done. If you (or any one for you, like myself) lets it slip that this suit is not throwing you into conniption fits, the lady may

fail to win it. Beats all! doesn't it? But I'm keeping my mouth shut tight about how you may feel or what you may expect to do. I don't know, and I'm not speculating.

"But this war isn't going to last forever, Governor. You're coming home to us, some day—when you've done all you can for freedom and right over there.

"I can't go across the pond to lend a hand. But, by Jove! if you can fight my battle over there, why can't I fight yours over here?

"Why can't I say something or do something to defend your honour? Give me your warrant, and my fight is on. I would, though, that I were far worthier. In this kind of a fight, what a man has been, counts. In the fight you're in, it doesn't—they say. I should be there, Governor; and you should be here. But, as it's otherwise, I want to do my part at least half as well as you're doing yours."

Stephen's reply was written in a dugout where he was awaiting the cover of pitchy darkness before going forth into the morass of mud on his nightly errand of mercy.

"We get so, here, good old Hughie," he wrote, "that we don't have a great deal to say about anything. We can't! Trifles don't matter. And for the other things there are no words.

"You seem very real and very near, Old Man. If I were to turn and see you sitting beside me, hunched up and smoking your stubby black briar, I shouldn't feel at all surprised.

"But the matters, the persons, you write about are most extraordinarily remote; my mind scarcely grasps them.

"This isn't 'heroics,' or anything related to them. I think I was always a plain and straightforward man. And since I last saw you I've become simpler and more forthright than ever—much more so. My personal experiences have made me so, and the experiences of men all about me have intensified it. There is no room in life for sham, nor for such expediency as rules Blackburn. There is room,

and time, only to do the few great, big, fundamentally right things which we now see clearly and believe utterly. Whether we live or die cannot go into the balance of our decisions—only, whether we do the things that we know are right and must be done.

"I have tried very hard to make myself realise as grave in its import to me, this thing that is going on in the courts of California. But I can't, Hughie! It's like a formal, legal acknowledgment of the death of something I have known to be dead for years—for ages! The acknowledgment is very important to me, of course. It does not give me freedom, but it recognises my freedom.

"At the first opportunity after this recognition is decreed (I have six days' leave of absence at the end of each six months' service) I shall marry Miss Atwell. I want her to be my wife. I want her to be my heir.

"But—I find it hard to explain, Hughie! There is no longer any freedom—in the world! There cannot be, until the arch-enemy of all freedom is put down.

"This supreme struggle does strange things to a man's attitude toward other interests. Only a few of the old issues of life 'hold'; most of them dissolve, disappear.

"Some months ago, when the war began, I was very full of resentment of Mrs. Bellas' behaviour.

"I do not find any of that feeling left. What she may say against me, to gain her suit, to save her self-esteem, does not anger me—it doesn't even interest me.

"I am glad to have her please herself. I bear her no ill-will—only the greatest indulgence. I wish her every good fortune.

"I am grateful to her, rather than otherwise. If she had known how to give me even a very little more happiness, I might have missed out of life all that makes me glad to have lived, to be alive.

"When I think that but for the barrenness of my domestic life, I might now be sitting about Nogales or Los Angeles waiting for quietude in Mexico and unable to lift a finger

to bring it about, I cannot feel ungrateful to the one who drove me into this immeasurably larger life.

"I am not doing anything, here, that is of real account—that thousands of other American men could not do at least as well, and *would* do if they knew the need as I know it.

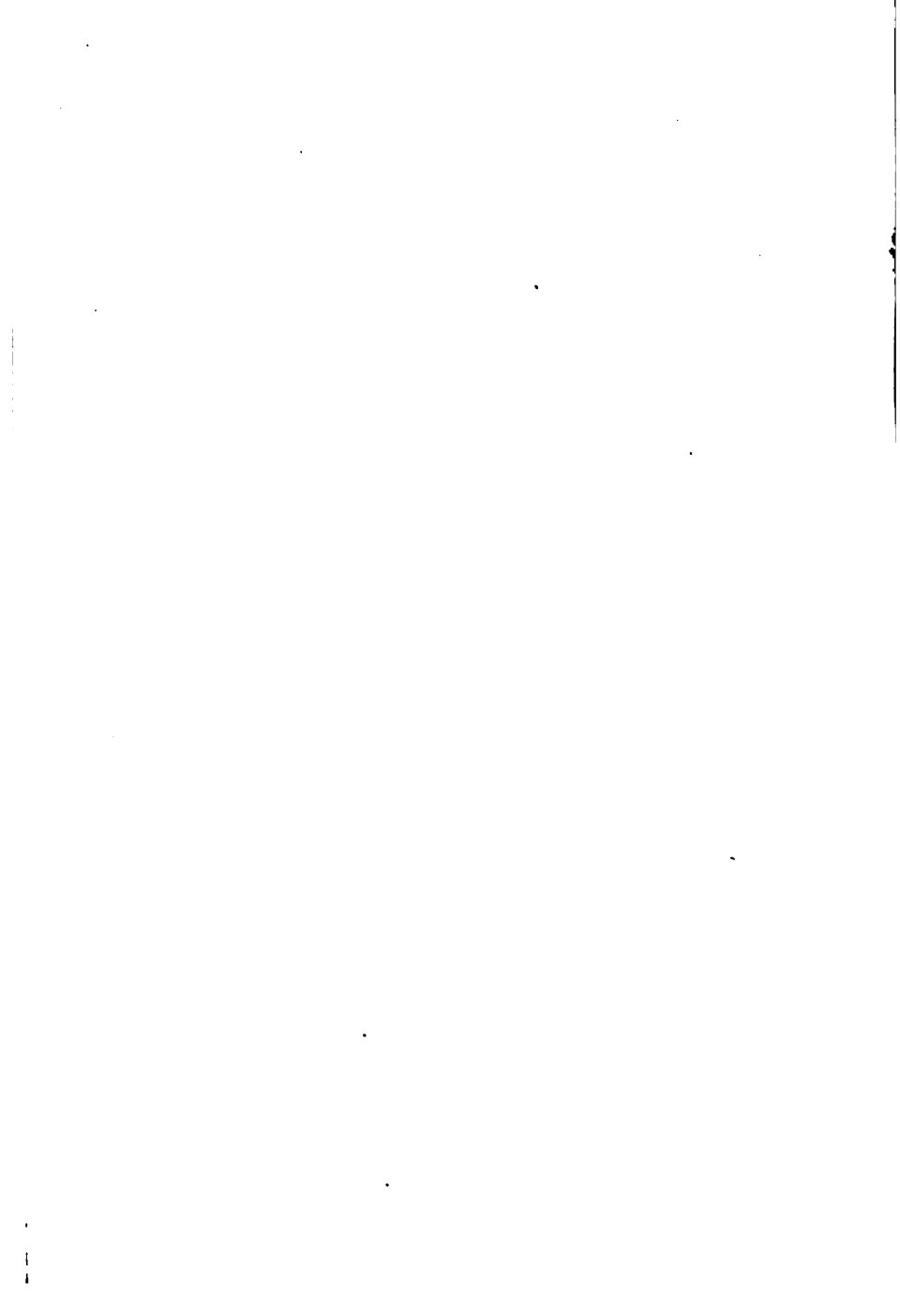
"But if I am giving little, I am getting much—more than I ever dreamed a man could take unto himself in a lifetime, without the aid of any great abilities.

"This is a rambling reply, Old Man, to your heart-stirring offer to fight my fight. It doesn't begin to say what I want to say to you. I haven't explained myself. I haven't half thanked you. But I believe it's the best I can do, now.

"Your championship of me pleases me 'most to pieces. You couldn't have sent more warmth and comfort to me. I'm no-end grateful.

"I know how you feel about the case. If I were there, I'd doubtless feel the same. But I'm here, Hughie. And it's different—as I've tried to say.

"Don't oppose Mrs. Bellas. Don't make things hard for her. Be glad for me: I love, I am beloved, and I am permitted to serve. What more can life give any man?"



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